CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.755
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ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY-FIFTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on
Thursday, 13 February 1997, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Sun (Republic of Korea)

GE.97-60212 (E)

The President: I declare open the 755th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament. I have on my list of speakers for today the representatives of Brazil and Japan. I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil, Ambassador Lafer.

Mr. LAFER (Brazil): Mr. President, may I begin by expressing my delegation's gratitude for the work you have undertaken in this session of the Conference on Disarmament? Your firm determination and competent guidance have been instrumental to this phase of the Conference, when difficult issues are being confronted. Knowing you from other forums, and having had the benefit of discussing many issues with you, I know how competently you have worked at the issues we have before us.

As this is the first time that I take the floor in the current session of the Conference, I would also like to thank your predecessor, as well as to welcome the permanent representatives accredited since the conclusion of last year's session.

It comes as no major surprise that the CD began its 1997 session entangled, as it still is, in a debate over its agenda and programme of work. The report of the then Special Coordinator on the agenda, Ambassador Meghlaoui of Algeria, presented to this plenary last year, had already detected a general acceptance that "the CD should have a new, balanced agenda which can boldly reflect the changes that have taken place in the world over the last few years". But the report also clearly cautioned that "rather large differences remain between the priorities expressed by the various groups". It seems natural that members wish to ensure that a new agenda will adequately reflect their needs and priorities in the post-cold-war world before agreeing to supersede the 1978 "Decalogue". The subject should therefore continue to require active coordination.

In the meantime, we encourage the course of action you have been following: to concentrate on the Conference's programme of work by attempting to weave consensus around a number of points encompassing both nuclear and conventional disarmament. The idea of striking a balance between these two broad categories is of course not a new one and may provide a way out of the current impasse. The same balanced approach could in our view also apply to certain items being considered, such as transparency in armaments. But placing greater emphasis than hitherto on conventional disarmament by means of entering into actual negotiations to ban "weapons that are actually killing people", such as landmines, should not downgrade the priority conferred upon nuclear disarmament in the Conference's agenda. Nor should it serve to downplay the global risk still posed by the continued existence of nuclear weapons. In our view, ridding the world of the greatest threat ever posed to civilization remains the paramount task for this conference. It is a political and axiological hierarchy.

Throughout the 1996 session of the Conference, Brazil and many other States time and again called for a real commitment on the part of all nuclear-weapon States to engage in a multilateral process within this forum with a view to achieving the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. These

calls took the form of reiterated proposals by the Group of 21 for the immediate establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, including a concrete programme of action by a number of countries, as contained in document CD/1419 of 7 August 1996. We of course regret the negative responses that these suggestions, which remain on the table, have so far elicited. Perhaps discussions on the overall programme of work may provide encouragement for viewing them, as well as possible variations, in a more positive light. To this end, it would be worthwhile to explore the idea of establishing one ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament under which separate working groups would take up issues such as the fissile materials convention and nuclear disarmament measures.

Surmounting these difficulties will certainly require perseverance and may take time, but the only way to preserve the CD's utility and credibility as a negotiating forum where all major players are represented is to allow for their opinions to be taken into account.

For more than a century, Brazil has been at peace with all its neighbours. We have renounced nuclear, biological, chemical and certain conventional weapons, our military expenditure ratio of GNP is among the lowest in the world. Credentials such as these incline us to encourage all serious proposals that may help others along the same paths, thus contributing to the global relaxation of tensions. In these endeavours, we are always guided by what President Fernando Henrique Cardoso terms "possible Utopias" in his efforts to confront and reduce the dauntingly complex Brazilian economic and social imbalances, which equally apply to the search for ways to deal with the most difficult international issues.

Brazil was at the forefront of the initiative which resulted in the adoption of resolution 51/45 B through which the United Nations General Assembly recognizes with satisfaction that nuclear-weapon-free-zone treaties are gradually freeing the entire southern Hemisphere from nuclear weapons. We see this as a natural consequence of the spread of nuclear-weapon-free zones throughout the southern Hemisphere, as well as a concrete contribution to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

As a founding member of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which celebrates its thirtieth anniversary tomorrow, 14 February, and was the first to bar nuclear weapons from a populated area, Brazil is gratified to see the growing support of the concept of nuclear-weapon-free zones. One not too far-off day we hope the entire globe will be a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

Together with 115 other countries, Brazil was one of the co-sponsors of resolution 51/45 S, also approved at the fifty-first United Nations General Assembly. We are convinced that negotiations on an effective, legally binding instrument proscribing the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines should start as soon as possible. We consider the CD, as the single multilateral disarmament negotiating body, to be the proper forum for the attainment of a universal and effective ban. We could accept an approach by phases, as has been proposed, which seems a course that could

yield early results. It is nevertheless our intention to continue to participate in the effort initiated in Ottawa last year, which could also play an important role in building political momentum for attaining the goal of a universal ban.

We have noted the importance many States attach to the early commencement of negotiations on a fissile materials production ban ("cut-off") treaty, an objective Brazil shares and supports. Should the Shannon mandate remain the basis for the establishment of an ad hoc committee, it is our expectation that the question of stocks will be dealt with within committee discussions on the scope of the future treaty. The reasons for this are twofold: first, how can a ban on fissile material production be effective without adequate knowledge and accountability of the amounts of such materials already in existence? Second, as was the case for the CTBT, the FMCT would be negotiated in a context where many nuclear-weapon States already have unilaterally stopped the activity intended for prohibition. If the future treaty is to have real impact beyond non-proliferation, and we hope it will, it would therefore also have to go beyond the narrow scope that some currently envisage for it. Another important issue from our point of view is to make sure that the costs of verification of such a treaty are carefully considered from the outset of the negotiation, as these should not unduly burden those States whose current international obligations in practice already subject them to the same prohibition envisaged under the future treaty.

Although Brazil has been doing its part to support and would welcome the start of negotiations in the CD on this subject, we cannot agree with views that seek to equate the eventual establishment of an FMCT ad hoc committee with actual CD work on nuclear disarmament, particularly given the current uncertainties regarding the scope of such a treaty.

We are also intrigued by assertions that conclusion of a fissile materials "cut-off" treaty should now take precedence over any multilateral nuclear disarmament discussion. In support of this, the "Principles and objectives" document approved during the NPT 1995 Review and Extension Conference is frequently cited. Reference is made to the sequential listing therein of three objectives under a "Nuclear disarmament" heading: the CTBT, the fissile materials convention, and "the determined pursuit by the nuclear-weapon States of systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally, with the ultimate goal of eliminating those weapons, and by all States of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.

It is certainly not our intention to offer an uncalled-for interpretation of what NPT parties agreed to, or did not agree to, in that text. But while concurrent progress for the first and second objectives was not only envisaged but repeatedly exhorted by many NPT parties throughout the CTBT negotiations, why doesn't the same reasoning apply when it comes to the second and third objectives? Does this mean that real multilateral advances towards the elimination of nuclear weapons are in effect being made contingent

upon the prior attainment of the fissile materials production ban? And now, as we hear, also upon the additional encumbrance of waiting for the CTBT to enter into force? If so, those who are quick to denounce linkages need look no further.

Proposals aiming at concrete steps towards a world free from nuclear weapons are gathering interest and support from various quarters. The past year witnessed a growing and influential body of opinion in the world, including within some nuclear-weapon States, that increasingly questions the case for indefinite retention of nuclear arsenals.

In the post-cold-war world, how to justify to concerned citizens the maintenance and perfectioning of arsenals of colossal and indiscriminate destructive force? The lack of clarity in defining the putative military utility of nuclear weapons today, as well as their staggering cost, only add to the wariness with which many are approaching their own Governments' dubious arguments.

For their part, cases for questioning nuclear weapons on moral or legal grounds, long stifled by the major Powers, are again finding their rightful place at the centre of the debate. The advisory opinion issued by the International Court of Justice on 8 July 1996 on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons breaks new legal ground in clearly establishing that such actions "would generally be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict, and in particular the principles and rules of humanitarian law". Moreover, in stressing that "there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control" the International Court of Justice adds its weight to a growing international clamour.

I stress the importance of this point because it is not understood as an obligation of behaviour. It is understood by the Court as an obligation to attain results. It has a different legal bearing and it is an awareness of legal consciousness of what has changed in the world. So, refusing to allow a proper role for the CD on nuclear disarmament does little to convince the international community that all is being done fo fulfil this obligation.

A fortnight ago we had the benefit of listening to the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Alexander Downer, who kindly laid before us the report of the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. We wish to express our gratitude to the Government of Australia for taking what we consider a particularly useful and timely initiative. The international stature and respectability of the Commission's members - among them Ambassador Celso Amorim, former Minister of External Relations of Brazil and one of my distinguished predecessors in this forum - attest to the seriousness and relevance of the outcome. Not only does the report propose realistic and practical steps towards a nuclear-weapon-free world. Its learned analysis of the nuclear-weapon situation, sober assessment of the consequences of a perpetuation of the nuclear threat and comprehensive rebuttal of avowed reasons for retention of such weapons provide perhaps the

most authoritative and thorough consideration of this question since the end of the cold war. The importance of such a report calls for both general and specific comments.

Momentous historical upheavals are usually followed by a period of uncertainty, as old doctrines are challenged and efforts are made to reflect on, understand and submit proposals with regard to the new international reality. The Canberra Commission report emerges as a particularly lucid effort, for it addresses one of the main issues of our time in a manner that combines the guiding force of high values and rational arguments with profound experience and technical knowledge of the subject-matter. As the eminent Italian thinker Norberto Bobbio has pointed out, the combination of these two are essential ingredients for meaningful intellectual reflection. It leads us from doubt to choice and it permits us to deal with the blocked alleys that the risk of war represents for humanity.

Brazil naturally supports the Canberra Commission report's central proposition that the nuclear-weapon State should immediately commit themselves to the elimination of all nuclear weapons, as well as its recommendation with regard to a number of immediate and reinforcing steps, many of which are coincidental with suggestions put forward by certain G-21 countries last August. This is not to minimize the important and necessary bilateral negotiations such as the START process under which significant warhead reductions and details for their dismantlement have been agreed to. We encourage prompt ratification of START-II by the Russian Federation so that the envisaged reductions can be implemented, and look forward to agreements that will further reduce the overall number of nuclear weapons. Immediately entering into a commitment on elimination as sought by the Canberra Commission would not disturb these negotiations, except hopefully to encourage them to move faster. Likewise, agreeing to establish an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament in the CD and to negotiate multilaterally a phased framework leading to nuclear weapon elimination would not necessarily imply bringing to this forum all technical matters of implementation, which would best be worked out - and we clearly recognize that - by the nuclear-weapon States themselves.

The assessments of the Canberra Commission's report are also helping to stimulate debate on the vital issue of the role of nuclear weapons in a post-cold-war context. In many instances, this debate is helping to underline how some arguments in favour of nuclear weapons are wearing thin. Their deterrent value against chemical or biological weapons is at best questionable, and to actually use them in retaliation for such an attack does not seem a viable proposition politically, let along morally. As for responding to a chemical, biological or nuclear terrorist threat, what practical purpose could really be envisaged for nuclear weapons? In fact, and as has been stressed by former mulitary commanders of the highest rank and experience, these weapons have no military value and since their only purpose is to deter a similarly equipped opponent, elimination would remove their sole justification. There is also of course the old argument whereby nuclear weapons are inevitable since the knowledge to make them cannot be expunged, but neither can it be in the cases of chemical and biological weapons, blinding lasers or landmines, for that matter.

(Mr. Lafer, Brazil)

There is no convincing reason for tacitly accepting that nuclear weapons must be a permanent feature of human society. Worn arguments can no longer divert attention from the hard truth that sheer political will is what is really lacking for States to give up nuclear weapons. It requires courage and leadership to unequivocally engage on a course to free mankind of the threat of nuclear calamity. We look upon those who share this vision to live up to it. Clinging pathetically to nuclear status symbols may in the end be a far riskier - and costlier - path to take.

Before closing, let me refer to one of the final points made by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, Sir Michael Weston, in his thought-provoking statement on nuclear disarmament delivered at the outset of the current session, in which he referred to the great playwright Oscar Wilde. We of course cannot agree with Sir Michael in automatically assigning to the realm of Utopia any idea or proposal for nuclear disarmament that does not fit his country's views. Oscar Wilde's Dorian Gray would have been delighted at such a seemingly perfect dismissal of inconvenient ideas. But Oscar Wilde also shrewdly observed, in The critic as artist, that England had yet to add Utopia to her dominions. This was in 1890, but there may still be hope. Growing support for bolder nuclear disarmament measures is making it more difficult to continue to stand in the way of any CD role on this subject, as well as to convincingly ascribe impractical or idealistic labels to ideas and proposals which are increasingly recognized as reasonable.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Brazil for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now call upon Ambassador Kurokochi of Japan.

Mrs. KUROKOCHI (Japan): I would like to make a brief statement today on the subject of nuclear disarmament. As I have already explained Japan's views on how the Conference on Disarmament should address this issue, both in the plenary on 30 January and in the informal open-ended Presidential consultations, I will not go into detail, but I would like to introduce Japan's proposal for a special coordinator on nuclear disarmament. As I have stated before, my delegation is of the view that, in addition to the fissile material cut-off treaty, the Conference should identify the issues of nuclear disarmament to be negotiated in the future. While nuclear disarmament is the most frequently discussed issue in the Conference on Disarmament this session, it seems that the basic lines of thought for dealing with nuclear disarmament continue to be divergent. Likewise, a convergence of views on an appropriate forum, or mechanism, has not yet evolved. Under these circumstances, we believe that the most practical approach to this problem is to make use of as flexible a mechanism as possible with a view to identifying the issue or issues of nuclear disarmament to be negotiated in the Conference on Disarmament. For this purpose, we propose that the Conference appoint a special coordinator who could, by means of bilateral, multilateral or any other form of consultations and discussion, provide a most appropriate forum for our deliberations. This will help to start, with no further delay, the process of building the common ground for this very difficult issue.

(Mrs. Kurokochi, Japan)

Japan's proposal is as follows:

"The Conference on Disarmament appoints a special coordinator to conduct consultations with its members to identify the issue(s) in the field of nuclear disarmament which could be negotiated in the Conference and to report to the Conference on the result of these consultations no later than the conclusion of the 1997 session."

We have prepared the text of our proposal with some explanatory notes. I would be grateful if the necessary arrangements could be made for this text to be circulated as an official document of the Conference on Disarmament.

Mr. NASSERI (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, you have been pursuing tirelessly, ever since you took the responsibility of leading the Conference, the issues that confront the Conference - the important questions of the agenda and the programme of work. You have spared no effort in trying to bring about an agreement within the Conference. The extensive consultations, formal and informal, have, in our view, been particularly useful in this context.

The Group of 21, for its part, has also been engaged on this issue and has held intensive consultations within the Group and without the Group - consultations which, of course, do continue. But I believe now, as far as the question of the agenda is concerned, it is in a position to forward a proposal that we believe could be a basis for agreement by the Conference. In that light, and since the plenary today has been rather short, I wish to request a 15-minute suspension of the meeting - and I mean 15 minutes - so that we could have further consultations on the matter and that hopefully we could be able to bring the proposal to the floor today.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you very much for your suggestion. I now give the floor to Ambassador Benjelloun-Touimi of Morocco.

Mr. BENJELLOUN-TOUIMI (Morocco): Of course, I subscribe to what our Coordinator has just said. We have just been given a document which seems to be a draft agenda for 1997. I wanted, before we go into a recess, to understand what the last sentence in it means. It seems rather strange to me, but of course, I think that if you give us some explanation, then the recess will make sense to us to be able to understand that.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you very much for your question. Well, actually, my intention was to suspend the plenary meeting and then at 12 noon convene an informal plenary for the purpose of discussing the draft agenda for the 1997 session. Then, that informal plenary would be followed by the resumed plenary.

I have just circulated to all of you my draft agenda for the 1997 session, and in reaction to the question raised by Ambassador Benjelloun-Touimi, this is exactly the same as the 1996 annual agenda minus one item, which is the Comprehensive nuclear-test ban. And I added one simple sentence at the bottom of the draft agenda, which is my attempt to make everybody happy. I hope that when we convene the informal plenary at 12 noon, discussions can be conducted on the basis of my draft agenda.

Mr. RAMAKER (Netherlands): Thank you very much, Mr. President, for the explanation you gave on the paper that you have just circulated. I thank you also for suspending the meeting until 12 noon. That would give some time, as you said, for consultations. I simply asked for the floor to make use of this microphone in order to suggest that the Western Group, very briefly, meets in room I so that I could inform them, to the extent necessary, of a number of discussions that have taken place during yesterday and during the morning, in which I was involved. So, it is not really to have a meeting, just five minutes of briefing, whereafter, I think, consultations as you suggested should go on in this room with all concerned so as to see whether we can reach a conclusion and discuss this as you suggested at the informal plenary at 12 o'clock. So it is mainly to abuse this microphone and ask that the members of my group come to room I, if that is open.

The PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. I hope my suggestion of 45 minutes' suspension will be acceptable to Ambassador Nasseri.

Mr. NASSERI (Islamic Republic of Iran): Well, certainly. I had asked for 15 minutes - 45 minutes is really extravagant. May I say then, if it is possible, perhaps our group could stay in this room, since it is a larger group, for consultations.

The meeting was suspended at 11.15 a.m. on 13 February and resumed at 12.10 p.m. on 14 February.

The PRESIDENT: The 755th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament is resumed.

I should like to put before you the draft agenda of the Conference for the 1997 session. This draft is contained in document CD/WP.483/Rev.1, which has been circulated to all of you. I assume that there is consensus on this draft agenda. I give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Mr. ASCHENBACH (Germany): The German delegation has stated in the informal plenary we just had that it was forced to reserve its position on the complex we have been discussing, the complete complex of the agenda. So I want to state this reservation now in the formal plenary.

The PRESIDENT: On the part of the President, having taken note of the statement by the representative of Germany, I declare the agenda is adopted.

In connection with the adoption of this agenda, I, as the President of the CD, should like to state that it is my understanding that if there is a consensus in the Conference to deal with any issues, they could be dealt with within this agenda.

I should like to express my deep appreciation to all delegations for the spirit of compromise and flexibility, and furthermore patience, which made the adoption of the agenda possible.

(The President)

As this is the last plenary of the Conference on Disarmament being presided over by the Republic of Korea, permit me to make a few comments.

As has been the case in the past, this year's CD started its work endeavouring to adopt its annual agenda, to establish its programme of work and to solve the recurrent issue of expanding its membership. I am pleased that the CD has been able to adopt this annual agenda for 1997 at the eleventh hour of my presidency. This was possible due to the spirit of cooperation, compromise and patience displayed by all the delegations. But there is still much work to be done, including the establishment of the work programme and organization of arrangements so that the substantive work in the CD may begin. Also, the CD has agreed to appoint a special coordinator on the expansion of its membership with a broad mandate. However, the appointment per se remains pending. Through the plenaries and other forms of consultations, the delegations identified their priority issues and made their positions on such issues more clearly known. In my view, the three sessions of the open-ended informal Presidential consultations, each devoted to such issues as nuclear disarmament, a fissile material cut-off treaty and anti-personnel landmines, were useful and contributed to moving the overall process of the CD forward.

I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, the Foreign Minister of Italy, Mr. Lamberto Dini, and the Foreign Minister of Australia, Mr. Alexander Downer, who each contributed to galvanizing the CD process by addressing the plenary at the beginning of its annual session.

I can now say that the task of the rotating President of the CD is not easy to fulfil. I know that the President's job is, inter alia to leave no stones unturned in pursuit of the common ground or consensus shared by all the members of the CD for starting negotiations on agreed issues. No efforts were spared on my part. The question of how to enhance the credibility and relevance of the CD as the single, multilateral negotiating forum for disarmament, which I raised in my opening statement on 21 January 1997, has yet to be answered collectively by all CD members. I extend my support and best wishes to the incoming President, the distinguished representative of Romania, who, I am sure, will advance most efficiently the important tasks of the presidency. I thank all the delegations of the CD for their cooperation and assistance during my presidency. My appreciation also goes to Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, the Secretary-General of the CD, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, the Deputy Secretary-General, and all the staff members of the secretariat, as well as the interpreters, for their highly valuable contributions. Finally, I wish all of you a very enjoyable weekend. The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 20 February 1997, at 10 o'clock.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.756
20 February 1997

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY-SIXTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 20 February 1997, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Grecu (Romania)

GE.97-60248 (E)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 756th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

My first words will be to express our sincere condolences and sympathy to the Chinese delegation on the occasion of the passing away of Deng Xiaoping, a paramount leader who has shaped Chinese history over decades, and an extraordinary figure on the international stage.

At the outset, I should like, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, to extend a warm welcome to our distinguished visitors today: the Right Honourable Don McKinnon, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Minister for Disarmament and Arms Control of New Zealand, and His Excellency Eugeniusz Wyzner, Secretary of State and First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland. The records of the Conference indicate that today's visit of His Excellency Don McKinnon is the seventh visit by a high-level Government official of New Zealand to the Conference on Disarmament. This testifies to the continued interest of the New Zealand authorities in the work of our Conference and the importance they attach to the multilateral approach to arms control and disarmament. Ambassador Wyzner is also a regular visitor to our Conference since he assumed his important functions. I am sure that the Conference is looking forward to listening to their statements.

Besides the Minister of New Zealand and the Secretary of State of Poland, I have on my list of speakers for today the representatives of Hungary, Indonesia, Ireland and Switzerland.

Once we have exhausted the list of speakers for today, I intend to put for the decision of the Conference the requests of Bolivia and Costa Rica to participate in our work as observers during the current session. With your concurrence, I shall put these requests for decisions without first going into an informal meeting.

Before giving the floor to the first speaker, I should like to make some opening remarks.

Let me start by addressing a word of gratitude to my esteemed predecessor, Ambassador Sun of the Republic of Korea, who conducted the work of the Conference in an exemplary, objective and efficient way. He deserves our admiration for succeeding to bring about the agenda of this year's session and breaking the ground for other achievements in terms of organizational arrangements. By the same token, I am convinced that the wealth of experience and wise counsel of Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, of his deputy, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail, and of all members of the secretariat will be of great help in performing my functions as President of this body.

It is a great honour for me to assume the presidency of the Conference on behalf of Romania. At the same time, I take this as a particular responsibility. At the dawn of a new century the Conference on Disarmament is

called to embark upon a process of self-examination and adaptation to a changed political environment. Well before the conclusion of the negotiations on the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty last year we all started to consider the future of the Conference on Disarmament, its new priorities, how it could best serve the legitimate aspirations of mankind. Appropriate responses and concrete actions are expected from us without undue delay. Indeed, in setting its objectives and working methods, in its very spirit, the Conference must reflect current international trends. Its negotiating role must be preserved and reinforced. Concrete results must crown our work if the Conference is to remain faithful to its generous goals. I shall spare no effort to serve the interests of the Conference to the best of my ability, in a balanced, open and pragmatic way. To that end, I pledge to all of you my entire dedication in discharging the demanding duties entrusted to the presiding officer of this illustrious body. And I rely on your assistance in dealing with the important questions ahead of us.

A "long-sought, hard-fought" objective in the process of arms control and disarmament, the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty has been recently brought to life due to painstaking negotiations undertaken by the Conference. Although the Treaty could not be formally adopted in this chamber it represents, along with the Chemical Weapons Convention, a major achievement of multilateral disarmament diplomacy in the post-cold-war era. As it stands now and has been proven at the signing ceremony, the CTBT satisfies the basic expectations of a large number of States all over the world. They sincerely share the view that the Treaty will impose, for the first time, constraints on the qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons and bring the nuclear arms race to a definitive end. That CTBT will make a key contribution to the programme of action on non-proliferation and disarmament agreed at the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review and Extension Conference, as a crucial step in the process towards complete nuclear disarmament. The conclusion of the CTBT will indeed make it possible to address the next important steps toward this goal.

It is now high time for all the friends of the CTBT to make every effort in order to speed up the ratification process and the entry into force of the Treaty as soon as possible.

Now that the CTBT is completed, a legitimate question arises: what will be next on the disarmament agenda? Assessing the outcome of the consultations conducted by my predecessor, it seems that three issues emerge as priorities of action, demanding appropriate answers on our part: nuclear disarmament, the fissile material cut-off and anti-personnel landmines.

The complete elimination of nuclear weapons is the declared goal of the whole international community. It is the supreme objective on the way to building a safer world for the generations to come. Since the end of the cold war, nuclear disarmament has registered unprecedented strides due to individual, bilateral and collective efforts. Unthinkable just 10 years ago, the achievements so far are impressive; they have indicated a viable, realistic, concrete path to follow. Other approaches could also be imagined, as they have taken shape in well-known initiatives. The CTBT has convincingly

demonstrated that the multilateral negotiating framework can bring important contributions to the overall process. The real problem now facing the Conference is how it could best promote nuclear disarmament so as to complement and build on the existing achievements. In the opinion of the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, who addressed the Conference recently, the CD has a unique opportunity to build on the successful work of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the parties to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

I consider seeking the views of member States on how to deal with nuclear disarmament within our Conference as one of the most urgent tasks of my mandate.

Many of us believe that a multilateral, effectively verifiable treaty to prohibit the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices will constitute a prerequisite step in the way towards a nuclear-weapon-free world. An FMCT is meant to cap the amount of fissile materials available for explosive military purposes not only in nuclear-weapon States but also in those States which currently have unsafeguarded enrichment or reprocessing plants. It will contribute to ensuring the conditions under which the process of nuclear disarmament can broaden, constrain the opportunities for vertical proliferation and help prevent any future resumption of the nuclear arms race.

The year 1995 marked an encouraging development in this field because for the first time the CD agreed to establish a "cut-off" ad hoc committee with a negotiating mandate under item 2 of that session's agenda. I hope that consensus on the important initiative on banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices can be invigorated and brought to fruition soon.

While the importance of addressing issues pertaining to weapons of mass destruction cannot be overemphasized, I shall be remiss if I overlook the acute problem of conventional armaments, in particular anti-personnel landmines, which constitute one of the most dramatic realities of our times. The recent adoption of the amended Protocol II to the Certain Conventional Weapons Convention is considered by many as an incomplete measure, lacking an important degree of efficiency, inadequate in coping with the global scourge of anti-personnel landmines towards the eventual elimination of these horrendous weapons. In reaction, an international strategy has been set up aiming at a total ban on APLs. Its stated goal is most ambitious: to conclude a treaty to that end by December 1997. Other initiatives in the same direction, undertaken by governments or non-governmental organizations in the political as well as practical fields, now intensify and expand on a global scale. Like the Secretary-General of the United Nations, I sincerely believe that the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament of the international community cannot remain apart from this ever-growing trend of action. There is, after all, a question of credibility and relevance facing our Conference.

(The President)

I can assure you that, on my part, I shall do my utmost in order to enable a consensus within the Conference on dealing with the issue of anti-personnel landmines. Our future work should address the issue comprehensively, taking into account all relevant aspects, including national security and defence concerns, as have already been voiced by many delegations. At the same time, our activity should be complementary to ongoing initiatives.

Other, more traditional issues, such as the prevention of an arms race in outer space, security assurances for non-nuclear States, and transparency in armaments, could be fruitfully addressed during our debates, within appropriate structures and working formulae.

I deem it no less important to bring our agenda up to date. At the beginning of last year's session we adopted a pragmatic work programme, centred on the completion of the CTBT, which in no way prejudged our individual positions. It was a useful approach which the Conference may wish to repeat this year. But we also need to address seriously the question of adapting our agenda to present-day realities, building upon what was already achieved in 1996 under the distinguished guidance of Ambassador Meghlaoui of Algeria. The appointment of a special coordinator to deal with the agenda's reform, therefore, seems to me important.

I look in the same way at the problem of further expanding the membership of the Conference and hope to announce soon the person entrusted with such a delicate responsibility.

Let me repeat my pledge to spare no effort in fulfilling the mandate entrusted to me. As a first step, I intend to hold a series of bilateral consultations with each and every delegation, in order to give everybody an opportunity to address outstanding issues facing the Conference, directly with the President, in an orderly and non-discriminatory fashion. You have already received, from the secretariat, an invitation to bilateral talks. After taking stock of the results, I shall further explore, in the most appropriate settings, what window of opportunity does exist toward consensus. But let us be very clear: the President is, as always, in the hands of the Conference; he cannot succeed where all of us fail.

Guided by optimism, courage and goodwill, the Conference should once again display its great potential to deal with challenges ahead. I strongly believe that this potential should be used, now maybe more than ever, most pragmatically to meet the hopes of the international community for greater stability and security worldwide.

This concludes my statement, and I thank you very much for your attention.

It now gives me great pleasure to give the floor to the Right Honourable Don McKinnon of New Zealand.

Mr. McKINNON (New Zealand): Mr. President, let me begin by congratulating you on the assumption of your presidency, and it is certainly a great deal of pleasure to me to have the opportunity to address this Conference on Disarmament. Let me also express my condolences to the Chinese delegation on the passing on of Mr. Deng Xiaoping, a man who indelibly put his mark on China as it is today.

I want to speak today about the important place we see for the Conference in relation to the web of interlocking commitments which collectively shape the security of each of our nations.

This Conference now comprises more than 60 countries from all corners of the globe - my country is one of the farthermost from this city. It negotiates agreements which aim to enhance security in all parts of the world, each of them a step towards the goal of general and complete disarmament under effective international control.

The list of achievements since the Conference began its endeavours is encouraging. Two entire classes of weapons that cause destruction on a massive and indiscriminate scale - chemical weapons and biological weapons - have been banned.

With respect to nuclear weapons, it was the CD which in 1968 made possible the Non-Proliferation Treaty under which the nuclear-weapon States agreed to eliminate these weapons, and almost all other nations have agreed to forswear the nuclear option entirely. And much to our satisfaction, 141 countries have now signed the ban on nuclear testing which was negotiated so recently in this chamber.

I wish today, therefore, to congratulate the Conference on Disarmament on those achievements, and to offer encouragement to the Conference to move on with confidence and determination to new tasks.

Moreover, the disarmament and arms control agenda is far from exhausted. Conventional and nuclear disarmament issues are complex and, in their scale, often very daunting. In the past progress has often been achieved, slowly, and in small steps, punctuated by periods of worrying hiatus.

We came, during the cold war, to accept this hesitation as the normal process of international consensus-building on arms control issues. But I want to put it to you, that what was normal in those days, need not be the governing reality today. It has been said many times, but remains true and deserves repeating, that there are opportunities today which did not exist a decade ago to reduce the risks posed by weapons of mass destruction. We must go forward so as to take maximum advantage of the reduction of strategic tension accompanying the end of the cold war. We must now also address the role which conventional weapons are now playing in the rise in regional conflicts with their devastating toll on human life.

We would all wish for a world free of war. This may not be immediately attainable, but there is an overwhelming desire for a world free of nuclear

weapons. The International Court of Justice has usefully and unanimously confirmed that there is a legal obligation to pursue and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to this end. The report of the Canberra Commission, introduced to this Conference last month by my Australian colleague, identifies a range of practical and progressively achievable actions and steps which need to be taken.

I know there are some who believe that this Conference should be the exclusive focus of this action, and others who identify only a marginal role for the CD.

To us, this argument seems somewhat beside the point. The trend towards reductions and ultimate elimination can, and should, be consolidated. But the important thing is that the momentum is maintained and enhanced. Where progress is achieved is less important to ordinary citizens than the fact that demonstrable progress must continue to be made.

It is a fact that the process of irreversible nuclear disarmament began in a bilateral framework. There were many good reasons, including the historical environment, why that is so. We applaud the success of the START process and we strongly urge that the START II Treaty enter into force as soon as possible. We look forward positively to a very early commencement of START III negotiations - preferably including, at the soonest possible time, all five of the nuclear-weapon States.

That said, we are also convinced that sustainable progress is not a matter which can be left solely to the nuclear-weapons States alone. We strongly endorse the political agreement reached in 1995 in conjunction with the decision to make permanent the Non-Proliferation Treaty. That agreement involved reinvigorating the multilateral disarmament process by which the NPT's interrelated goals of non-proliferation, universality and, ultimately, nuclear disarmament are pursued.

If there is a sense that a dynamic and genuinely interactive process is under way, involving progress at both bilateral and multilateral levels, we are convinced that wide international support will be forthcoming.

We know that developments affecting global and regional security are occurring which are outside the influence of the Conference on Disarmament. This reality demands our continuing attention to the big picture, and the "big picture" is about substance, not procedures. It demands that we put less efforts into wrangling about process and more effort into negotiating measures not only on nuclear weapons, but also to verify the ban on biological weapons, and our full support for the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention which we hope will come into force in late April with the United States and the Russian Federation amongst its members.

At the regional level the steps we and other members of the ASEAN Regional Forum have taken together to promote security complement those

arrangements developed for the greater security of countries in Europe, Latin America, and Africa. We hope that this trend will soon extend to the Middle East and South Asia.

New Zealand works with our fellow members of the South Pacific Forum to protect our region's status as a zone free of nuclear weapons. Last October we joined with members of other zones to reiterate our conviction that nuclear-weapon-free zones enhance regional and global security, and bring us closer to our goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.

But a ready acknowledgement of the progress that must be achieved outside the Conference on Disarmament if we are to approach a world in which the steady reduction and eventual elimination of nuclear weapons is possible does not, to our mind, diminish the contribution that this Conference must also make.

The long-awaited Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban treaty will, I am sure, be seen by future generations as a major building-block of such a world, and one achieved by a multilateral negotiating process. We believe that there are additional multilateral negotiating steps which the CD can and must take which, taken together with other tracks inside and outside the CD, can be fairly viewed as a part of a comprehensive programme. Banning the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons is one such step ripe for CD negotiation, and I urge the Conference to take it up without further delay. New Zealand's view is that the report of the Canadian Special Coordinator allows for an approach which could address the concerns of all in relation to the scope of the production ban.

But again I stress that each of these steps has to be part of a broader approach. It is not satisfactory to wait until the conclusion of the cut-off convention before taking another step in the field of nuclear disarmament. An ad hoc committee with an overarching mandate to contribute to this ultimate goal could begin immediately with the cut-off negotiations, while also considering longer-term issues. The Committee would, in effect, be operating on two levels - an active negotiating track and a preparatory track. For the latter, there is already an abundance of material to begin with, including notably the Canberra Commission's report, while some members of this Conference have put forward their own "programme of action". Discussion of the various proposals would enable the Conference to identify those on which it can add value now itself, those on which it can add value in the future, and those on which immediate progress would more readily be achieved, for example if pursued among the nuclear-weapon States themselves.

I am aware of, and share, the view that the Conference must not become a talk-shop, but one does not have to look far into the past to find examples of ad hoc committees which prepared the ground carefully and effectively for eventual negotiations. This interactive approach was in fact the successful precursor to the CTBT negotiations. And a dynamic approach of this kind would be consistent with the programme of action defined by Non-Proliferation Treaty

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States parties in April 1995. Most importantly, it will help to restore and help to maintain confidence in the agreements reached in relation to that Treaty's indefinite extension.

While New Zealand agrees with the priority attached to the cut-off negotiations, I welcome the renewed focus in discussions on the role the Conference on Disarmament can play on conventional arms control and disarmament questions. An understandable preoccupation with the dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction must not prevent the international community from addressing ways and means to reduce as quickly as possible the risks posed by the weapons which make up the armouries of the great majority of nations. Such weapons may not have the same destructive powers as nuclear, chemical or biological weapons but they can and do extract an appalling toll around the world and their proliferation can be, and is, destabilizing.

I am well aware that one of the key questions under consideration in recent weeks is whether the Conference might play a part in international efforts to address the problem of anti-personnel landmines. There is a strong tide of international opinion - which New Zealand supports vigorously - that rejects the military use of these most indiscriminate weapons when set against the deadly toll extracted on innocent civilians, as well as the economic and developmental loss in countries already devastated by war, and concludes that only a total ban is an acceptable goal. Now, of course there are many aspects to this issue, including a concern about the potential for export of mine production facilities offshore.

Where should a total ban be negotiated? Well, New Zealand has considered three alternatives, each with its respective advantages and disadvantages. First there is the process of reviewing the Inhumane Weapons Convention which produced some very useful advances - New Zealand plans to express its consent to be bound by the amended Protocol II in the next few months. Secondly, we have the Conference on Disarmament here. It is the international community's normal negotiating body. Its membership includes some, but not all, of the countries who use, produce, trade or are affected by landmines. And thirdly, there is the process begun in Ottawa last October which offers a free-standing forum where all those nations committed to a total ban could quite quickly achieve their common aim, setting a norm against the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of APLMs.

New Zealand has declared a unilateral moratorium on the use of these APLMs by the New Zealand Defence Force. We prohibit the export of these weapons and we will participate in any and all collective efforts to put in place rapidly a total ban which can command the support of as many countries as possible.

We are concerned to capture the political impetus for early action and therefore support the Ottawa Process and will participate enthusiastically in it.

We also accept that there is a potential role, of course, for the CD. We would be pleased to see a negotiation in the CD proceed in parallel with

the Ottawa Process provided there is a political willingness to reach an early agreement on a strong mandate supportive of an early and comprehensive outcome.

I need to stress in this context that New Zealand's commitment is not limited to negotiation of new agreements. We are making a significant effort to help address the practical problems in the field which flow from the indiscriminate use of landmines in countries that I have seen like Cambodia, Angola and Mozambique. Our Defence Force contributes to demining efforts around the world in the above countries, as well as providing practical support to the United Nations Secretariat in New York and to the United Nations Demining Trust Fund.

In addition to the problem of landmines, there are other pressing conventional arms questions which of course the CD must take up. One of the fruits of the end of the cold war has been the suspension of strategic competition, reflected in the decline in some countries of military expenditure. Yet there is evidence that the rapidly evolving sophistication of conventional arms, and commercial pressures to secure export sales, are creating a wider market for weapons. The proliferation of such conventional arms, especially to regional trouble spots, has implications for regional military balances as well as for the international community.

The United Nations Conventional Arms Register and the Wassenaar Arrangement both aim to promote transparency and greater responsibility in the transfer of conventional arms and dual-use goods and technologies, thus helping to prevent destabilizing accumulations. Given the trend I have mentioned, the Conference should develop further global measures to curtail destabilizing build-ups of conventional arms.

So my aim today has been to convey, from a small country's perspective, our sense of the Conference's role and our view of its priorities, far as we are from this city of Geneva. The Conference does not operate in isolation from the wider interplay of nations and regions searching for enhanced security. It has to be accountable to the wider international community.

The composition and working processes of the CD must remain fully conducive to the negotiating challenge. The Conference has already demonstrated a capacity to reform with the expansion of its membership achieved last July. Its membership today, and a continuing open mind to additional members, will ensure that it deserves the international community's backing well into the twenty-first century. Moreover the Conference cannot remain isolated from the drive to reform the United Nations system and bring it up to date. The Conference should therefore initiate a study of its own working methods, consistent with the overall goal of ensuring that the Conference is an effective instrument of the international community for the next 50 years.

And let me now close by again welcoming this opportunity to demonstrate New Zealand's commitment to the Conference on Disarmament, and wishing you and the Conference a very productive and worthwhile session.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade and for Disarmament and Arms Control of New Zealand for his important statement and for the kind words he addressed to the Chair. I should now like to give the floor to Ambassador Eugeniusz Wyzner of Poland.

Mr. WYZNER (Poland): First, I wish to join you, Mr. President, and Minister McKinnon in expressing to the delegation of China our profound condolences on the passing of Deng Xiaoping, one of the outstanding statesmen of the twentieth century, a great leader of the People's Republic of China and an architect of its remarkable economic growth.

Let me first convey to you my felicitations on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. My delegation is delighted to see the Chair of the CD occupied by a representative of Romania, a country with which Poland is linked by traditional bonds of friendship, which - as confirmed during the recent visit of the President of Romania, Emil Constantinescu, to Warsaw - is firmly based on shared values and aspirations. You may rest assured that in the discharge of your mandate you will have the full cooperation and support of the Polish delegation.

I also express to the outgoing President, the distinguished representative of the Republic of Korea, Ambassador Sun, our appreciation for the dedication and perseverance with which he sought to put the 1997 session of the Conference under way as expeditiously as possible.

I would also like to add words of greetings to my good friend and colleague from my days at the United Nations Secretariat, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, the distinguished Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and personal representative of the Secretary-General, as well as to the Deputy Secretary-General of the CD, Mr. Abdelkader Bensmail.

It is invariably a great privilege and pleasure for me to address the Conference on Disarmament. More than that, it is also an indication of the importance which Poland has consistently attached to disarmament and arms control. In fact, for its national security my country relies on concrete disarmament measures coupled with expanding the area of European peace, stability and prosperity associated with the processes of Euro-Atlantic integration in the political, economic and military fields. As the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum of the international community, the Conference on Disarmament has, over the years, been instrumental in negotiating major arms control and disarmament agreements, especially in the field of weapons of mass destruction. The fact that one of them - the Chemical Weapons Convention, to which I shall revert in a little while - will shortly go into effect only adds to the esteem in which this forum is held by the international community.

The remarkable result of its session last year, the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty, has added to the high standing of the CD. With the

CTBT overwhelmingly supported by the United Nations General Assembly last September, the role of the Conference on Disarmament as a negotiating organ that "can deliver" has been established even more firmly.

In our view, therefore, no effort should be spared in order to make it possible for the CD to remain true to its image as a multilateral body with a clear mission. The agenda for 1997 which has just been approved must provide a framework for a realistic work programme, carrying a reasonable promise of early and tangible results. The promise of such results would be jeopardized or lost altogether if efforts to reach agreement on a work programme were to be complicated by linkage of issues and belittling or total disregard of their intrinsic merit. Embarking on such a course would not be helpful.

We need to invoke the more positive experience of this body, that of the readiness of its members to be flexible over narrower concerns in the broader and overriding interest of international peace, security and cooperation.

By reaching early agreement on the practical goal, or goals, which would focus its attention in the post-CTBT days, the CD will demonstrate its sustained vitality. It would also be a signal that following the long overdue expansion of its membership the credibility and effectiveness of the Conference on Disarmament have been significantly enhanced.

Poland strongly believes that pending the conclusion of its consultations on the review of its agenda, and without prejudice to their outcome, the CD will agree on a practical programme of work which could eventually result in a new multilateral agreement. In Poland's view, such potential can be found in the cut-off in the production of fissile material for weapons or other military purposes. We believe that with the comprehensive test ban issue taken off the agenda of the Conference, the negotiation of an early cut-off treaty appears to us to be the logical next step to take, and in this regard we share your opinion as expressed in your opening statement.

In our view, a renewed effort must be made to re-establish the relevant ad hoc committee and launch negotiations in that respect as soon as possible. Squarely placed within the context of nuclear disarmament, such negotiations ought to be the focal point of CD efforts in 1997. Should we fail to seize this window of opportunity, our ultimate objective of a world free of the nuclear threat might not be a practical proposition and a credible beacon into the twenty-first century.

There are at least two abiding reasons why the CD should undertake cut-off negotiations. First, a fissile material cut-off treaty would constitute yet another major step towards meeting the obligations of article VI of the NPT. Second, the immediate launching of negotiations in that respect would be consistent with the "Principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament" adopted by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference.

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A fissile material cut-off treaty would represent a significant supplement to the NPT and CTBT, the two CD-negotiated instruments that form the mainstay of the non-proliferation regime.

In our view, the Ad Hoc Committee established in March 1995 should be reactivated immediately and instructed to start constructive negotiations under its original mandate which, as it is known, is broad enough to accommodate all legitimate concerns. I am sure that no delegation would be found out of order by raising for consideration in the Ad Hoc Committee any issue relating to the scope of the future treaty.

It is clear that a ban on anti-personnel landmines is increasingly on the minds of the international community. That has been confirmed by the statement just delivered by the distinguished Minister of New Zealand, by the debate at the United Nations General Assembly last year and by the many statements and important proposals put forth at the current session of the CD. The issue is not whether to seek an APL ban. The point is rather how and where to go about it, and when to get it.

The growing public concern over the global landmine crisis, its humanitarian aspects and the calls for urgent remedial action must come as no surprise to this body. Half a century after the Second World War, Poland has still to cope with the wartime heritage of killing and maiming landmines and other ordnance. Polish servicemen on United Nations peace-keeping missions in the Middle East, on duty in the former Yugoslavia and elsewhere, run daily the risk of their lives from a variety of APLs, including booby traps.

For these reasons, also, we have felt all along - and I said so last year in my statements in this forum and in the First Committee of the United Nations General Assembly - that the Conference on Disarmament, a global body by definition, has a useful role to play in seeking global bans on specific conventional weapons systems, including landmines. We are determined to stay in the mainstream of international efforts to deal effectively with the global landmine crisis. To prove it, here are some of my Government's actions resulting in, first, a moratorium on exports of anti-personnel landmines which, upon its expiry on 1 January 1998, will be extended indefinitely; second, appropriate administrative procedures under way with a view to the early ratification of Additional Protocol II (the Landmine Protocol) of the CCW Convention; and third, co-sponsorship of General Assembly resolution 51/45 S, as well as associating with the "Ottawa Process" and its general objectives.

At this juncture let me say that Poland has taken note with interest of the initiative of the Government of Canada to conclude by the end of 1997, for humanitarian considerations, an anti-personnel landmine agreement in a free-standing, other-than-CD forum.

We have also welcomed the proposal of France for a phased approach to an APL ban within the context of the CD, as well as the related United Kingdom document containing a draft mandate for such negotiations in an ad hoc committee to be established by the Conference on Disarmament.

(Mr. Wyzner, Poland)

The Government of Poland considers that the pursuit of a global ban on APLs, a measure aimed at the elimination of a specific weapons system to which some ascribe a defensive role, should be the responsibility of the Conference on Disarmament. To our mind, an appropriate negotiating process in this respect should envisage the active participation of the principal producers, exporters and users of APLs. Such negotiations would add substance to and meaningfully complement the efforts of the like-minded countries within the framework of the "Ottawa Process", which seeks a narrower and early accord aiming at humanitarian objectives.

Poland welcomes the growing appreciation for the potentially synergistic effect of these two approaches. Accordingly, we strongly support calls for the early establishment by the CD of an appropriate ad hoc committee. The United Kingdom proposal suggests a good starting-point and a suitable basis for agreement on a broadly acceptable mandate in this respect. We are ready to take a constructive part in any negotiations that the Conference on Disarmament might decide to undertake soon.

My country considers it desirable that some of the issues dealt with in the past in the relevant ad hoc committees also be actively pursued in 1997.

We believe that it would be useful, for instance, to go back to the question of security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon States. In particular, the unilateral security assurances of the nuclear-weapon Powers to non-nuclear-weapon States contained, as we know, in Security Council resolution 984, deserve careful examination to determine whether they could represent a basis for the search of broader multilateral instruments of a legally binding nature.

Likewise, nothing should, in our view, stand in the way of a comprehensive reassessment of the question of transparency in armaments, including work on further improvement of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. A possible substantive and geographical expansion of the United Nations Register, providing for coverage of other categories and classes of weapons, could render that instrument more attractive to States which have not yet associated themselves with its objectives. In effect, an updated register could attract much wider, hopefully universal, support.

In Europe, as is well known, transparency in military matters was critically important for the successful conclusion of the CFE Treaty of 1990. Today, when the Treaty comes for re-negotiation to reflect better the present political and strategic realities in Europe, transparency and trust related to military matters are as important. Due to their relevance in the European region and beyond, the question of transparency as, indeed, the broader issue of control of conventional weapons, deserves, therefore, priority attention. As the incoming Chairman of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe for 1998, and now a member of its "Troika" or bureau, Poland intends to keep this consideration in mind. At a time when thousands perish from conventional arms indiscriminately used in countless regional conflicts, both

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internal and international, the continued indifference of this forum to calls for meaningful action in that regard, we think, cannot be sustained any longer.

My Government is fully confident that, provided there is political will, tangible action addressing conventional weapons would not be beyond the scope either of the ability or the competence of a forum that has to its credit the successful negotiation of bans on whole categories of weapons of mass destruction, including biological and chemical weapons.

Turning briefly to these subjects, which no longer figure on the CD agenda but certainly stay within the purview of its attention, let me say that the Government of Poland has welcomed with satisfaction the results of the recent Fourth Review Conference of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. We have been gratified in particular by the unequivocal support which the Conference in its Final Declaration gave to the Ad Hoc Group of States parties to continue and speed up its efforts to elaborate an effective verification mechanism which this important treaty is now lacking. We trust that such encouragement will enable the Ad Hoc Group to proceed soon to actual drafting, an exercise which we expect to produce a draft verification protocol acceptable to all States parties to the BTW Convention.

In concluding my intervention, I should like to offer a comment or two on the Chemical Weapons Convention. The Government of Poland warmly welcomes the fact that this important treaty will go into effect in a little over two months - on 29 April. As a result, the CWC Organization in The Hague will be able to proceed to the elaborate verification procedures provided for in the Convention.

We were gratified that in view of the imminence of this event, the United Nations General Assembly was able last fall, for the first time in some years, to adopt the relevant resolution without a vote. As it is known, resolution 51/45 T makes it plain that for the CW Convention to be fully effective, vigorously implemented and credible, it has to obtain universal support and as many ratifications by the time of its entry into effect as possible. This goes, in the first place, for States with significant chemical industries and the declared possessors of CW.

The Polish Parliament ratified the CW Convention on 27 July 1995. Since then, specific measures have been enacted providing for an appropriate national implementation oversight mechanism. For that purpose, an Interministerial Committee, which I have the honour to chair, and a Standing Inter-Agency Expert Group have been established.

The unique significance of the CW Convention and its implementation, especially the destruction of stocks, stems from the deadly efficacy of chemical weapons both in wartime and long thereafter. On one occasion this fact was painfully brought to mind by an act of terrorists. On another and more recent one, by the misfortune of a group of Polish fishermen, who, instead of the usual catch, hauled on board their small craft from the shallow Baltic waters off the Polish coast remnants of deadly mustard gas. Early and

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effective medical intervention saved their lives. This, however, may not always be the case. Vast quantities of poison gas in corroding canisters dumped in the Baltic will be an ever-present hazard in those shallow waters unless definite action is taken.

Appropriate damage control measures and prevention of threats to lives and the environment posed by the underwater stockpile of poison gas are among the chief concerns of the respective Polish institutions. These and relevant problems are also cooperatively discussed within the framework of the Council of Baltic States.

The Conference on Disarmament has found itself at an important crossroads. It has to decide which way to turn and which practical goals to pursue with firmness, dedication and competence. I am confident that its laudable record of past accomplishment is a heritage of wisdom and experience on which the CD can rely for guidance also in regard to its work programme for 1997. The delegation of Poland is determined to work to this end in close cooperation with other members of the Conference on Disarmament.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Secretary of State and First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland for his statement and for the kind words he addressed to the Chair. I should now like to give the floor to the representative of Hungary, Ambassador Péter Náray.

Mr. NARAY (Hungary): Let me also start my statement by expressing condolences to the Chinese delegation on the passing away of Deng Xiaoping, who played an historic role in reforming China.

Mr. President, I wish to extend the warmest congratulations of my delegation to you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. It is a special pleasure to take the floor under the chairmanship of the representative of neighbouring Romania, with which our bilateral relations have received a major impetus after the recent entry into force of the Basic Treaty. I can assure you of the full support and cooperation of the Hungarian delegation, also in our capacity as Coordinator of the Eastern European Group, in all your endeavours.

Let me also pay tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Joun Yung Sun of the Republic of Korea for his efficient leadership that has enabled us to adopt the agenda for the 1997 session of the CD.

I wish to welcome the statements by our two distinguished visitors today, Mr. McKinnon of New Zealand and Secretary of State Wyzner of Poland. Their participation has greatly enhanced our deliberations.

Situated in the proximity of a turbulent region, Hungary knows the value of peace and stability. Motivated by the sincere desire to create the framework conditions for a new and complex international security system, my Government constantly seeks to participate in cooperative efforts in this regard at the bilateral, regional as well as global levels. Thanks to these

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undertakings my country has contributed to stability in our area due to the consolidation of democratic institutions and sustained progress towards a full-fledged market economy.

At a time when the basic feature of international relations is the increasing interdependence of the players in the areas of security, economic and social relations, humanitarian and other affairs, multilateral diplomacy, including international organizations, has an important role to play in the solution of all major problems our world is faced with. We take the view that progress in promoting peace and stability facilitates the disarmament process and, on the other hand, success in disarmament negotiations has a tangible positive impact on international security. It is in this spirit that Hungary approaches the current issues of the disarmament and arms control process and the way they should be treated in the Conference on Disarmament this year. We are confident that there is a common ground for, and a shared interest in, elaborating a concrete programme of work. This should be balanced between the aspirations of the different constituencies of this body.

The aim to satisfy divergent expectations and priorities does not, however, justify the creation of artificial linkages. As shown by the experience of recent years, such tactics can only damage the efficiency and credibility of the CD. Our efforts should be targeted - with the ultimate objective in mind - at achievable and practical results, without creating situations where some issues will be bound to become hostages of other ones, to the detriment of the whole process.

This principle particularly applies to the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. The general recognition of the need for and commitment to further systematic, progressive and steady efforts towards the elimination of nuclear weapons must be translated into concrete measures. The process has its own logic, it own sequence of steps and stages. Each achievement opens the road for the next one which, in its turn, also may advance the case further. My Government is reassured that the strengthened review process of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the decision on "Principles and Objectives" provide us with a reliable mechanism to promote this goal.

Hungary is committed to the implementation of what has been decided upon at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference. The conclusion of the CTBT negotiations is only the first major achievement in the further consolidation of the international non-proliferation regime. We call on all States to sign and ratify the Treaty as soon as possible in order to permit its early entry into force. Being included in the list of States annexed to article XIV, Hungary is aware of its responsibility and will act accordingly. The smooth start of the work of the Prepcom for the CTBTO and the PTS is also an essential ingredient of the process.

The strengthening of the norm of global non-proliferation of nuclear weapons requires additional urgent measures. The Hungarian delegation strongly advocates the commencement of work on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT). As it was the case with the CTBT, the moratoria observed by

the majority of the nuclear-weapon States indicate that this long-standing issue is ripe for serious negotiations. The Hungarian delegation has taken note of the divergent approaches to the question of existing stocks. Since the mandate contained in the Shannon report accommodates the different shades of opinion to that effect, the re-establishment of an ad hoc committee based on it seems to be within reach. We urge delegations to overcome procedural difficulties and get down to substantive work on an FMCT.

The Conference on Disarmament has won credit by negotiating several major treaties in the field of weapons of mass destruction. It is justified to continue this pattern. At the same time we cannot lose sight of the profound transformation of the international security agenda in recent years which put conventional disarmament into the limelight. The Hungarian delegation reiterates the importance of finding an appropriate place for this issue in the CD's programme of work. The resolve of the member States to address and solve really burning issues affecting the life of millions of people most immediately is put to the test.

One can hardly find a more challenging task today than the elimination of the roots of the tremendous humanitarian disaster caused by the large-scale deployment of anti-personnel landmines. Hungary has aligned itself with the Joint Action of the European Union of 1 October 1996, and stands ready to work actively towards the achievement at the earliest possible date of an effective international agreement to ban these weapons worldwide. This stance was further developed by a December 1996 resolution of the Hungarian Parliament on the subject. The legislature requested the Government to pursue this objective and support all related international initiatives, and propose negotiations on this problem with the countries of our region. The envisaged steps will be taken in addition to the export moratorium observed by my country since 1995.

Hungary seeks to raise the issue of a total ban on the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel landmines in a multilateral context. It was for that reason that we co-sponsored General Assembly resolution 51/45 S. As participants, we cannot but welcome the results of the Ottawa Conference and its follow-up meeting, held last week in Vienna. We believe that this process helps to create and maintain the necessary momentum to promote this case and build up the widest possible international support for it.

The CD's role in the concert of efforts aimed at a total ban should be considered from the point of view of the universality and efficiency of the future convention. Its composition, the presence of the major producers and exporters of APLs, as well as the available rich experience and expertise qualifies it for being an appropriate negotiating forum.

The Hungarian delegation supports the proposal to establish an ad hoc committee, as put forward by France. The draft mandate submitted by the United Kingdom delegation deserves serious consideration. We are flexible about a possible phased approach in order to comply with existing realities.

(Mr. Náray, Hungary)

At the same time we would have serious difficulties with a mandate not stipulating a total ban on use and production as the ultimate goal of the negotiating process in the CD.

This Conference constitutes part of the multilateral disarmament machinery. Achievements in other related fields may influence in a positive way the atmosphere in this room, too. We look forward to the imminent entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention. This treaty has a comprehensive character and far-reaching political and security objectives. Its virtues, in full, will become apparent when implemented and implemented by all States with significance in this field.

The total prohibition of chemical weapons is supported by a complex and sophisticated verification regime giving assurance to States parties of full compliance, even in extreme cases. My Government has been actively promoting the objective of similar measures to be elaborated in the context of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention. Hungary, not only as a country honoured to chair the Ad Hoc Group but also as a State party interested in strengthening the BWC through an effective and workable verification mechanism, attaches great significance to the work of the Group. Drawing on the results of the sessions held in 1995 and 1996, and given the decision endorsed by the Fourth Review Conference to intensify its work, we are confident that the Ad Hoc Group will be in a position to fulfil its mandate within the agreed time-frame, i.e. as soon as possible before the commencement of the next Review Conference.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Náray for his statement and for the kind words he addressed to the Chair. I should now like to give the floor to the representative of Indonesia, Ambassador Agus Tarmidzi.

Mr. TARMIDZI (Indonesia): Mr. President, since this is the first time I take the floor under your presidency, please allow me to sincerely congratulate you upon your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. We are all aware that the early stages of the work of the Conference have always been difficult. But, cognizant of the fact that you possess outstanding credentials, I am confident that you will be able to further capitalize on the praiseworthy achievements of your immediate predecessor, Ambassador Sun of the Republic of Korea, whom I should like to wholeheartedly thank for the excellent manner with which he conducted our previous work. My delegation will, certainly, pledge its fullest cooperation in order to help you discharge these demanding tasks.

I would also like to take this opportunity to convey my delegation's deep condolence to the Chinese delegation on the great loss of their prominent leader, Deng Xiaoping.

I also seize this occasion to welcome our newly arrived colleagues, the distinguished Ambassador Dembri of Algeria, Ambassador Campbell of Australia, Ambassador Chowdhury of Bangladesh, Ambassador Mernier of Belgium,

Ambassador Bold of Mongolia and Ambassador Leal of Venezuela. I trust that they will bring with them fresh ideas that will be most beneficial in revitalizing the work and productivity of the Conference on Disarmament.

My delegation would also like to warmly welcome amidst us in the Conference the Rt. Hon. Don McKinnon, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Minister for Disarmament and Arms Control of New Zealand, a country with which Indonesia enjoys cordial and excellent relations. I wish also to offer to His Excellency Mr. Eugeniusz Wyzner, the Secretary of State, First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland our warm welcome. We have carefully listened to their keynote speeches. They, indeed, contain a web of resourceful elements which could, hopefully, give a strong new impetus to meeting the demanding challenges with which the Conference is now being confronted.

Today, I wish to limit my statement to nuclear disarmament, one of the hardest agenda items which the Conference on Disarmament has been addressing since its inception.

Taking into account the horrendous and devastating effects of these weapons of mass destruction, Indonesia has from the very beginning identified nuclear disarmament as one of the highest priorities in its foreign policy. Indonesia is indeed not unique in this regard. Almost all nations share the same strong viewpoints and, through many forums, such as the United Nations General Assembly, the International Court of Justice and, in fact, this Conference, they have made it abundantly clear that nuclear disarmament continues to be the most pressing task before us.

Indonesia has always been consistent in its policy towards nuclear weapons and nuclear disarmament. As one might recall, during the cold-war era, we questioned the utility and the use of these horrible weapons for obvious reasons. Today, when bloc politics and confrontations have disappeared and mutual understanding and cooperation among nations are being nurtured instead, Indonesia is even more determined than ever to see these weapons abolished while the window of opportunity is still open. It is our belief that at this juncture, in which nuclear war is hardly conceivable, the nuclear disarmament issue can no longer be brushed aside and treated as a trivial issue. As the embodiment of the world community's conscience and the sole recognized multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament, this Conference not only shoulders the primary responsibility for finding ways and means to really deal with the problem, but is also the most appropriate venue to commence the negotiations on a universal, effectively verifiable and legally binding multilateral treaty regulating the development, production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons and their destruction.

It is against these backdrops that Indonesia has always been supportive of all United Nations General Assembly resolutions calling for the global and total elimination of nuclear weapons under strict and effective international control. One might recall that Indonesia was also among those countries which presented the case to the International Court of Justice for its advisory opinion on the legality of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. In

the framework of the Conference on Disarmament, my country has also consistently supported proposals put forward by the Group of 21 for the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, as contained in document CD/1388 of 14 March 1996, and the programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons tabled by 28 countries belonging to the Group of 21, as contained in document CD/1419 of 7 August 1996, to name a few.

At the regional level, Indonesia was among those which strongly supported from the very beginning the conclusion of the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone (Bangkok Treaty) which, if implemented, together with the Treaties of Tlatelolco as well as Rarotonga and Pelindaba, will significantly contribute to the objective of achieving a world free of these appalling weapons. In this regard, my delegation strongly urges all nuclear-weapons States to accede to its protocol at the earliest possible date, thereby rendering the Treaty effective and implementable. I feel honoured to disclose before this august body that very soon, the Government of Indonesia will pass a national law ratifying the Bangkok Treaty.

These modest measures which we have undertaken are, indeed, testimony of our determined commitment to nuclear disarmament. I firmly trust that, if not all, an overwhelming majority of countries, particularly the States parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, have also faithfully undertaken similar actions. It is within this context that my delegation deeply regrets the recalcitrant attitude adopted by some of the nuclear-weapons States towards the need to immediately negotiate a treaty banning nuclear weapons. They have, instead, consistently denied their multilateral legal commitments to nuclear disarmament assumed under article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which clearly stipulates: "Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament ...". Worse still, there have been persistent efforts to narrowly interpret these multilateral legal commitments by insisting that nuclear disarmament is a bilateral exercise and, therefore, the sole domain of the nuclear-weapons States. And non-nuclear-weapons States should only confine themselves merely to the non-proliferation realm. If this one-sided perception continues, we feel that it will ultimately imperil the legal nature of the Treaty.

I would therefore venture to remind those nuclear-weapons States to be as prudent as possible, for it may lead to the unravelling of the Treaty to which we are all committed. For us, article VI of the Non-Proliferation Treaty is a legal multilateral endeavour and, coupled with the decisions taken during the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, especially on the "Principles and objectives for non-proliferation and disarmament", should be honoured both in letter and spirit. We expect no more; we demand no less. And they indeed required prompt actions. The reference to "an early date" in article VI of the NPT cannot be construed otherwise as "for ever".

Much has been said on the need to establish an ad hoc committee to negotiate a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices (cut-off treaty). Let me, however, reiterate my delegation's position on this delicate issue. First, my

(Mr. Tarmidzi, Indonesia)

delegation considers that the completion of such a treaty will significantly contribute to the continued and tireless efforts of the international community in preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects. Secondly, we view this cut-off treaty as a disarmament commitment as well. It should, therefore, encompass not only the future production but also the past production of these materials. We are fully aware of the sensitivity of making an explicit reference to past production in the mandate of the ad hoc committee as clearly highlighted in the Shannon report. My delegation, however, is of the opinion that brushing aside the issue of stockpiles would, once again, render the cut-off treaty a mere non-proliferation measure.

As a representative of Indonesia which has assumed immense non-proliferation legal commitments through inter alia article II as well as article III of the NPT and article III of the Bangkok Treaty, the cut-off treaty with such a characteristic has no added value to date. It is therefore unappealing to Indonesia. The mandate contained in the report of Ambassador Shannon indeed made no explicit reference to the existing stockpiles of fissile material, but it acknowledged that this issue to which many delegations attach great importance cannot be isolated with the Conference starts actual negotiations. It is with this understanding that my delegation stands ready to revisit the question of the cut-off treaty, using the Shannon report as a basis to begin.

After having reflected in a somewhat detailed manner on nuclear disarmament, I would be less than candid if I did not touch briefly upon the issue of anti-personnel landmines (APLs). We are horrified at being constantly reminded of the abhorrence and the destruction inflicted by landmines, especially on the peoples of the developing world. However, we think it falls more within the ambit of humanitarian issues. Indonesia, for one would not stand in the way of reaching an agreement on this issue being discussed if it is so wished by the Conference. Having said that, my delegation wishes to reiterate that this Conference should not be sidetracked from negotiating the highest-priority item in our agenda, namely nuclear disarmament.

Let me conclude by bringing to your attention the report prepared by the Canberra Commission and the statement of more than 80 renowned generals across the globe in which it is inter alia asserted that the nuclear weapons option is non-viable and that nuclear weapons have no military value. They have therefore called for the total elimination of these inhumane weapons from the world's arsenals. If these former first-class generals and eminent persons have come to such a crystal-clear conclusion, I believe we do not need to first retire from our posts as these renowned generals have in order to see the wisdom they have so aptly arrived at.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Tarmidzi for his statement and for the kind words he addressed to the Chair. I should now like to give the floor to the representative of Ireland, Ambassador Anne Anderson.

Ms. ANDERSON (Ireland): At the outset, Mr. President, let me express warm congratulations and good wishes to you, also convey our thanks to Ambassador Sun and, of course, join in the condolences which have been expressed to the Chinese delegation.

In my statement today, I wish to address three questions: the challenge facing the CD in the nuclear disarmament area, the potential for work within the CD on anti-personnel landmines, and the issue of CD enlargement.

In the view of my delegation nuclear disarmament issues must remain at the heart of the CD's work; making progress on these core issues remains our top priority for 1997. We have all the ingredients for achieving progress if there is the necessary political will to do so. There is no shortage of material to work on. We have Ambassador Shannon's report including the mandate for an ad hoc committee on a fissile material cut-off convention; the G21 proposal for the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament; the phased programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons tabled by 28 countries; and the observations in September 1996 of the then Western Group coordinator on the CD's agenda.

Creating a wider context for our work, there is the document setting out the principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament adopted the NPT Review and Extension Conference in 1995. The Australian Foreign Minister has also commended the report of the Canberra Commission to stimulate our thinking and discussion. And there is an important acquis which should remain intact; the consensus in this room that the Conference should negotiate a fissile material cut-off convention on the basis of the Shannon mandate and report.

Despite all of this groundwork, progress so far has not been possible. Some delegations are reluctant to embark on an immediate negotiation on cut-off unless and until they have placed it in the context of an overall programme to achieve nuclear disarmament. In the words of the Japanese Ambassador, the so-called blueprint approach. In the words of others, linkage.

My delegation has on many occasions stated its concerns about linkages being made between parts of the nuclear disarmament negotiating process. Such linkages are usually counter-productive, more likely to engender paralysis than promote progress. We feel strongly that each proposal should be dealt with on its merits, taking into account its possible contribution to the achievement of nuclear disarmament, and not be viewed as a bargaining chip to promote other objectives, however worthy they may be.

Nevertheless, rather than simply decrying linkages, we have to try to understand why they are made and if there is anything that can reasonably be done to meet the concerns of those who make them. Why do some delegations here need reassurance about the direction we are taking? Have they lost confidence in the incremental approach to nuclear disarmament? Do they

believe that we are seeking to negotiate only non-proliferation rather than disarmament agreements? Has there been a decline of faith in the ability of the nuclear Powers themselves to agree on further cuts in their arsenals?

The recent nuclear disarmament record is hardly so poor as to warrant such a loss of confidence. In fact, considerable progress has been made over the past decade. There have been unilateral measures on the part of the nuclear-weapons States, bilateral agreements between them and multilateral efforts in this Conference. We believe START I is a significant achievement in nuclear disarmament and we look forward to the ratification of START II by the Russian Federation and its early implementation. We also find the unilateral measures taken by Britain and France encouraging. And of course the conclusion of the CTBT was a historic achievement. The step-by-step approach to nuclear disarmament, using all possible avenues of negotiation, has achieved results important enough to justify the claim that this method has proven the most effective.

More, however, can be done to build confidence. The nuclear-weapons States are committed to systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally with the ultimate goal of eliminating these weapons. They are under a continuing obligation to demonstrate their determined pursuit of such efforts. In our view, it would help to create confidence in the process of nuclear disarmament if, severally or jointly, the nuclear-weapons States set out their perspective, and imbued the words "systematic and progressive" with meaning. This would be a confidence-building measure and could greatly help to enhance faith in the incremental approach to nuclear disarmament. Such a perspective need not be time-bound, but could be a reaffirmation on the part of the nuclear Powers of the process of nuclear disarmament through a broad elaboration of the next steps they themselves propose to take.

But back to the immediate procedural questions here. In a celebrated line, the Irish poet W.B. Yeats asked: "How can we know the dancer from the dance?" Although the poet's context was of course vastly different, I am reminded of the question by the CD's exhaustive debate over objectives and process. It seems increasingly difficult for some delegations to distinguish the process from the objective; they are becoming one and the same. We need to be clear. The objective is nuclear disarmament and the process we use to achieve this is not an end in itself.

The Conference is a negotiating body and the focus of all its efforts should be negotiations. It would surely be sensible for the Conference to establish a forum or a mechanism to enable it to consider the question of what nuclear disarmament measures it might negotiate in addition to, or after the conclusion of, the fissile material cut-off convention. That is, the Conference could seek to arrive at a consensus on those negotiating steps towards nuclear disarmament which might require a multilateral effort in the CD. The programme of action tabled by 28 countries could be just one proposal on the table in such a discussion. The discussion could also take into consideration the possible future bilateral or plurilateral efforts of the P5 and also the positions of the non-declared nuclear-weapons States.

(Ms. Anderson, Ireland)

The establishment of such a forum or mechanism for the consideration of the possible next steps in multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations would not constitute, in itself, a substantive step. It would simply permit the CD to develop a longer-term perspective on its future nuclear disarmament agenda. In the meantime the Conference should immediately, on the basis of the Shannon mandate, get down to negotiations on the fissile material cut-off convention.

The second issue which has attracted considerable attention from all delegations is the proposal that the Conference should initiate negotiations on anti-personnel landmines.

This is an issue of great concern to my Government. Ireland was one of the original members of the then very small group of countries committed to a global ban on anti-personnel landmines. Our revulsion at the horror and misery caused by these weapons is strengthened by many years of United Nations peace-keeping and the experiences of Irish development workers in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Rapid political progress towards a global ban on the use of anti-personnel mines was made last year. In October 1996 the Council of the European Union adopted a Joint Action, a key foreign policy instrument, which committed all 15 members of the EU to the goal of the total elimination of anti-personnel landmines. Also in October 1996 the Canadian Government convened the Ottawa Conference which adopted the Ottawa Declaration. As we know, this has set in train the so-called Ottawa Process which should result in a new international norm banning anti-personnel landmines in December 1997. The Vienna meeting, last week, added further impetus. Finally, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 51/45 S, with 156 votes in favour and none against, urging States to pursue vigorously an effective, legally binding international agreement to ban the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines with a view to completing the negotiations as soon as possible.

I have elaborated these developments to underline that the international effort to ban landmines is not just beginning now with preliminary discussions in the CD, but began some time ago. The effort has attracted strong and high-level political support from a large number of countries; it is overwhelmingly supported by the public, leading NGOs and a growing band of senior military figures. The fact that the issue has now emerged in the discussions on the 1997 work programme of the Conference on Disarmament is a further reflection of the political momentum behind the effort to achieve a global ban on landmines.

We have listened carefully to the views of many delegations concerning the involvement of the CD in this area. Like others, we have struggled with competing considerations to try to define our approach on the issue. On the one hand there is the argument that the Ottawa Process caters only to the like-minded; countries which do not face the difficult security concerns which impel others to justify the continued use of APLs on the grounds of legitimate self-defence. In this view, the Ottawa Process would produce a norm which

would be subscribed to by a limited number of countries. It is suggested that any negotiation in the CD would be more likely to secure eventual universal adherence.

On the other hand, it is clear that the CD has among its members countries who have fundamental difficulties in accepting a global ban on landmines. These countries might need careful persuasion, over a long period of time, if they are ever to commit themselves to a ban. Moreover, the CD works slowly and not often with great transparency; it could provide many opportunities to the less than enthusiastic to slow discussion down to a standstill and to drain energy from discussions outside the CD. The CD does not include among its members many countries most seriously affected by mines. Neither does it have any experience of dealing with the humanitarian aspects of any convention banning the use of landmines. And smaller CD delegations might have some difficulty dealing simultaneously with two very different sets of negotiations - anti-personnel landmines and fissile cut-off.

On balance, we can see merit in the suggestion that the Conference should be given an opportunity, if it so desires, to turn the massive international support for a comprehensive ban on anti-personnel landmines into a concrete treaty text. However, we would wish to stress a number of key considerations conditioning our approach. Firstly, if the CD is to engage itself in this crucial issue, it must, as a starting-point, build on what has already been achieved in terms of international consensus on the way forward. Secondly, any negotiations on a ban on anti-personnel landmines must be comprehensive from the outset. In particular they must cover the central question of use. Thirdly, negotiations or attempts to initiate negotiations must take very seriously the words "as soon as possible" in the United Nations resolution. By this I mean that our commitment to negotiations or the launching of negotiations in the CD on anti-personnel landmines cannot remain open-ended. If the Conference on Disarmament is to play an important role in these negotiations it must move rapidly. If the Conference spends months talking around a mandate, further months discussing the modalities of the negotiations and yet more time on the scope of the convention, then the Conference will not respond to the humanitarian urgency implicit in the words "as soon as possible". Finally, the proceedings of the Conference must reinforce and complement other efforts, such as the Ottawa Process, which have already begun, which are working well and which have attracted a high level of international support. The Conference cannot conduct its negotiations in a vacuum. I must also stress again what I said at the outset: that we continue to believe that the primary focus of the CD's attention must be the resolution of the issues which inhibit the commencement of the negotiations on a fissile material cut-off convention.

Before concluding, I should like to address the question of the further expansion of the Conference. There are now 17 delegations seeking admission as full members. I believe the Irish application, which sadly will celebrate its fifteenth anniversary this year, heads the list. What does the Conference propose to do about all of our applications and when will it take action?

(Ms. Anderson, Ireland)

We are grateful to the many delegations who publicly have supported the case for early action by the Conference to deal with the remaining applicants and who privately have expressed support for our application. We believe that the early appointment of a special coordinator with a comprehensive mandate to deal with all of the issues raised by a further expansion of the Conference is the best way forward. We are conscious of the efforts which have been made to secure the early appointment of such a coordinator and, indeed, I noted your comment in that regard at the outset of our meeting today. We believe that the appointment of this coordinator should in no way prejudice the claims of the Group from which he or she comes to other coordinator posts to deal with other issues arising in the Conference.

The question of the further expansion of the Conference must not become yet another hostage in the negotiations over the future work programme of the Conference. The Conference on Disarmament is a unique body in the constellation of bodies which deal with multilateral negotiations. This body deals with issues of fundamental importance to the future security of the world. It seeks to negotiate agreements which are universally applicable. It is our strong belief that a body of this importance needs to have a transparent system in place for dealing with applications for membership. Outside the doors of this room, in the United Nations system which surrounds us, there are loud calls for reform, for openness and for modern methods of working. Is the CD to become a backwater, isolated from the tide of change which is washing through the multilateral system? Reform of antiquated working methods is an urgent requirement. Perhaps the task might begin with a more efficient and acceptable system of dealing with applications for membership. And perhaps this small reform might begin now.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Anderson for her statement and for the kind words she addressed to the Chair.

(continued in French)

I would now like to give the floor to the representative of Switzerland, Ambassador Erwin Hofer.

Mr. HOFER (Switzerland) (translated from French): First of all I would like to express our deep sympathy and our condolences to the Chinese delegation for the painful loss of a great statesman.

This is the first time that the Swiss delegation has had the honour of speaking at this session of the Conference on Disarmament. As this coincides with your taking up the Chair of the Conference, Sir, before anything else I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you and to express the satisfaction which my delegation feels at seeing you guiding our work. We have no doubt that you will follow the path blazed by your predecessor, Ambassador Sun, who, thanks to perseverance which combined skill with imperturbability, enabled us last week to adopt an agenda which will form the structure of our work. I can assure you that we will spare no effort to support you in discharging your mandate at this crucial stage of the work of our Conference.

(Mr. Hofer, Switzerland)

The Swiss Government is convinced that, in a logical continuation of the past activities of the Conference, an ad hoc committee should be set up without delay to negotiate a treaty on the prohibition of the production of fissile material for military purposes. I shall say no more about that now, but reserve the right to come back to this point.

The Swiss delegation would like to take up another subject, which was addressed in informal consultations conducted by your predecessor. This is the subject of anti-personnel landmines. Switzerland is well-known to be one of the most advanced States in this area. Since 1969, it has no longer been producing anti-personnel landmines or components for such mines. In 1990, anti-personnel mines were withdrawn from the equipment issued to troops. In 1994, the Swiss Government decreed a moratorium on the export of anti-personnel mines and their components to States which are not bound by Protocol II to the 1980 Convention on Conventional Weapons. In 1995, it decided to completely renounce the possession and use of anti-personnel landmines. The destruction of existing stockpiles of mines will be completed by the end of this year. For its part the Swiss Parliament adopted a law on 13 December 1996 prohibiting the development, manufacture, procurement as an intermediary, acquisition, transfer to anyone, import, export, transit or stockpiling of anti-personnel landmines or any other form of handling of such weapons.

We all know the approximate number of mines scattered throughout the world. We are not unaware of the human suffering provoked by these weapons every day and the economic and social damage they cause. Consequently no one disputes the fact that the international community must do its utmost to remedy this situation. Since the time factor is decisive, there is an urgent need to take appropriate measures, and specifically to ban anti-personnel landmines by means of a treaty. To be effective, the planned rules should cover, first, a ban on the manufacture, stockpiling, possession, transfer and use of anti-personnel landmines, and secondly, an obligation to destroy existing stockpiles of anti-personnel landmines. Switzerland has declared on several occasions, and confirms this today, that it is prepared to support any initiative along these lines and to participate actively in any discussion concerning an effective ban on anti-personnel landmines to take place in an appropriate framework. This is why Switzerland supported the initiative taken by the Canadian Minister for Foreign Affairs, His Excellency Mr. Lloyd Axworthy, last October, with a view to the rapid conclusion of a convention banning anti-personnel landmines.

Switzerland, convinced that the anti-personnel landmine problem calls for a speedy solution, is participating actively in the work forming part of the Ottawa Process. Thus it was that a Swiss delegation took part in the expert meeting held in Vienna from 12 to 14 February 1997. This meeting confirmed that, for an overwhelming majority of States, the humanitarian tragedy brought about by anti-personnel landmines must cease as soon as possible. It therefore represents an important and promising stage on the path which should lead us, by the end of this year, to the signing of an agreement banning anti-personnel landmines.

(Mr. Hofer, Switzerland)

The Conference on Disarmament has made a highly appreciable contribution to international security. However, the idea that it might elaborate a treaty banning anti-personnel landmines is not gaining acceptance, because landmines are defensive conventional weapons. Nevertheless, Switzerland does not reject this prospect out of hand because it is prepared to discuss the problem of anti-personnel landmines anywhere and at any time. Should the Conference decide to form an ad hoc committee and to give it a mandate on anti-personnel landmines, the following points should be taken into consideration. First, the mandate of the ad hoc committee should refer to an agreement totally proscribing the production, stockpiling, transfer and use of anti-personnel landmines and requiring the destruction of stocks. Secondly, it is not acceptable as a matter of principle for the use of mines to be banned after other prohibitions have come into force (the phased approach). A ban on the use of anti-personnel landmines is the most urgent and immediately effective measure for the people concerned. Thirdly, the members of the ad hoc committee will have to bear in mind that the proposed instrument is more a matter of humanitarian international law than of disarmament law. It is therefore important to promote the protection of the individual rather than the interest of States in ensuring their own security, and not to give too much weight to verification and the universality of the future regime, elements which we know are of particular importance in the field of disarmament.

The Swiss delegation in no way objects to the Conference on Disarmament dealing with the problem of anti-personnel mines. However, it does consider that an instrument banning these weapons will be credible and effective only if it contains precise rules and if it is concluded rapidly. If the Conference can formulate a mandate within the proper time taking account of these requirements, Switzerland will be prepared to cooperate in the Conference with a view to the conclusion of such an agreement. But it is convinced that an agreement must be reached quickly, because the extent of the tragedy caused by anti-personnel landmines does not allow the slightest hesitation.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank Ambassador Hofer for his statement as well as the kind words addressed to the Chair.

(continued in English)

This concludes my list of speakers for today. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? I give the floor to the representative of China, Ambassador Sha.

Mr. SHA (China) (translated from Chinese): Mr. President, the Chinese delegation offers congratulations to you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament for this month. We pledge to cooperate with you and your delegation in order to promote progress in our work.

The Chinese people's beloved Mr. Deng Xiaoping passed away as a result of illness at 21.08, 19 February 1997 in Beijing. He was 93. Mr. Deng was an outstanding leader of great stature among the people in all the ethnic groups

in China. He was a great revolutionary, statesman, military strategist and diplomat. He was the chief architect of China's socialist reform and opening up to the outside world as well as its drive for modernization. He was also the founder of the theory of building socialism with Chinese characteristics. The glorious and epic life of Mr. Deng Xiaoping fully demonstrated that he was truly a great son of the Chinese people. He deeply loved his country and people. The Chinese people in turn loved him deeply.

The passing away of Mr. Deng Xiaoping represents an inestimable loss to our people and brought profound grief to them. They are determined to turn grief into strength and carry on the behest of Mr. Deng Xiaoping. They will express their grief by striving even harder through concrete actions in all fields of endeavour.

Under the firm leadership of the Central Committee of the Communist Party with Comrade Jiang Zemin as its core, the Chinese people will hold high the banner of Deng Xiaoping's theory of building socialism with Chinese characteristics and, with determination and confidence, bring to fruition the great cause of China's socialist reform, opening up and modernization initiated by Mr. Deng Xiaoping.

I should like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Chinese delegation, to express our heartfelt thanks to you, Mr. President, to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of New Zealand, to the First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Poland and to my other colleagues for their words of condolence on the passing away of Mr. Deng Xiaoping.

The PRESIDENT: I thank Ambassador Sha for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Does any delegation wish to take the floor? I see none.

As I announced at the beginning of the this plenary meeting, I should like to take up for decision the requests presented by Bolivia and Costa Rica to participate as observers, in accordance with the relevant rules of procedure of the Conference, in our work. These requests are contained in document CD/WP.484, which is before you. May I take it that the Conference agrees to these requests?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: The next plenary meeting of the Conference will take place next Thursday, 27 February 1997, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.757
27 February 1997

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY-SEVENTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva
on Thursday, 27 February 1997, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Grecu (Romania)

GE.97-60292 (E)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 757th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

At the outset, I should like to extend a warm welcome to the newly appointed representative of Cuba, Ambassador Carlos Amat Fores, who is attending the Conference for the first time. I wish to assure him of our cooperation and support.

Towards the end of this plenary, I shall invite the Conference to consider the requests of Luxembourg and Kyrgyzstan to participate as observers in its work, in accordance with the rules of procedure, without first going through an informal plenary.

I have on my list of speakers for today the representative of Slovakia. I now give the floor to Ambassador Mária Krásnohorská.

Mrs. KRÁSNOHORSKÁ (Slovakia): Mr. President, please allow me to commence by congratulating you on the assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. It is a great pleasure to see a fellow representative of the Central European region in this office. I can assure you of my delegation's full support for your endeavours.

I should also like to pay a special tribute to your distinguished predecessor, Ambassador Joun Yung Sun, who spared no effort in looking for solutions and generally acceptable compromises in order to formulate the CD's agenda for 1997. If I may use his expression, he "left no stone unturned", and at last, thanks to his diplomatic skills and hard work, he found the right solution.

At the same time, I should like to extend my warm feelings to the Secretary-General of the Conference Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, his deputy Mr. Bensmail, and their staff, as well as the interpreters, for their valuable support and services. Lastly, I want to welcome the newly arrived colleagues and wish them all the best in their work and private life in Geneva.

I believe the positions of my country on the agenda and the practical work programme of the CD are quite clear. They have been made public several times by my delegation, as well as by the coordinator of the Eastern European Group at the Presidential consultations. Therefore I have so far felt no need to speak on the discussed issues. Nevertheless, we always honour the wishes of the CD Presidents. My statement today is therefore a reaction to your predecessor's appeal to all delegations which have not spoken yet during this session.

As usually happens after important achievements by international bodies, the crossroads represents a major challenge. The challenge requests of all the participants to analyse the past and look into the future with a certain distance and political wisdom. The Slovak delegation has followed the discussions on the CD agenda and work programme with great attention. Unfortunately, the progress seemed to be quite slow and painstaking, the

(Mrs. Krásnohorská, Slovakia)

positions of some delegations rather inflexible. We have sometimes been concerned by the spirit of non-confidence and, from time to time, confrontation. My country believes that mutual confidence, pragmatism and concentration on the issues that join us rather than those that separate us is the only way to proceed.

Slovakia many times spoke in favour of a modernized agenda. Unfortunately, it was not possible to reach consensus on its modernization at the present stage. We therefore supported the path suggested by the President and fully accepted the modified 1996 agenda as the "lowest common denominator". It is less than we wished but we fully realize how much effort the President invested in this affair. At the same time we have believed that the adoption of the agenda for 1997 is a fundamental prerequisite for the further work of the CD. Now we are, thanks to Ambassador Yung Sun, better off. Nevertheless, we are not over the water yet. The issue of the CD's work programme is no less contentious than the agenda. On the contrary, my delegation believes that especially the discussion on the working programme will verify the flexibility, readiness to compromise and political wisdom of its participants. In the heat of the debates we should remember that international public opinion is watching the CD proceedings very closely. The expectations are far from being low. The CD, as the only multilateral negotiating body on the issues of arms control and disarmament, should better meet them. It has no right to freeze all substantial progress due to a deadlock.

Special have been also the expectations of the Slovak Republic, which worked so hard to assume the post liberated by the former Czecho-Slovakia. It would be disappointing to start year 1997 by dragging consultations and postponement of the work on real problems that go beyond the walls of this room and concern millions of people. Let us get down to this work.

I have used this floor several times to express Slovakia's concerns about linkages being introduced between substantial elements of the CD's work. We still believe that such linkages are not likely to be helpful - on the contrary, there is a realistic threat that they will be counter-productive and endanger progress even on those items where it is possible.

Now, Mr. President, let me kindly share with you some comments and remarks on the subject of the CD's work programme. I want to re-emphasize that the CD is the only global arms control and disarmament negotiating body. It has therefore to deal with the most pressing issues. We believe that today these issues are the question of nuclear weapons on the one hand and conventional weapons on the other. The intensive consultations led by your distinguished predecessor Ambassador Yung Sun showed that within these two fields there are at least three issues commanding quite broad support, namely the fissile material cut-off, nuclear disarmament and the complex issue of anti-personnel landmines. Slovakia believes that the CD should concentrate on these issues.

After the completion and adoption of the CTBT, the CD should continue to play its primordial role. When looking for ways on how to meet this task in

(Mrs. Krásnohorská, Slovakia)

the field of nuclear weapons, we should start by the implementation of the "Principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament". In Slovakia's view, the CD should concentrate on the negotiations on the fissile material cut-off treaty as a further logical step on the path of nuclear disarmament. We believe that the FMCT ad hoc committee should be re-established without further delay. Special Coordinator Ambassador Shannon's mandate can serve as the basis of the ad hoc committee's work. The mandate is broad enough to meet all legitimate concerns.

In our view the CD should, at the same time, start a discussion in order to explore what further role it could play in nuclear disarmament and to identify the specific issues on which it could embark. An extensive and complex discussion on this issue is a prerequisite and should carefully lay the ground for eventual negotiations.

Concerning conventional weapons, in recent years it has become a cliché to state that since the Second World War, conventional weapons have taken a tremendous toll on human life. In the stricken countries regional or local conflicts caused disruption of States, their economies and social structures and often led to unprecedented humanitarian crises. One of the modern plagues causing this disaster are anti-personnel landmines. The reason is the incredibly high number of indiscriminately laid mines. Unfortunately, mines are inexpensive, easy to produce and use and their life-span is very long. On the contrary, mine-clearing is a very demanding and risky activity. Slovakia welcomed the international community's understanding of the growing humanitarian crisis and the start of action. In 1994 the Slovak Government confirmed that Slovakia does not produce any mines and, also in 1994, adopted a moratorium of unlimited duration on all transfers. Slovakia has participated in the multilateral efforts from the very beginning by co-sponsoring the relative United Nations General Assembly resolutions and supporting the strengthening of Protocol II to the CCW. Since last year it has also taken part in the Ottawa Process. I therefore believe that it will be no surprise if I reconfirm our interest in the landmines issue. We are of the opinion that the strengthening process of the CCW did not meet expectations. The problem of landmines has become so grave that every suitable possibility and forum is to be made use of, including the CD, for the promotion of the issue. Especially, if we are interested in the realization of a global and effective ban on anti-personnel landmines, supported by a simple but effective verification mechanism. We believe that the CD has the necessary experience and expertise to achieve this.

On the other hand, I have to emphasize that we do not perceive the opening of negotiations in the CD as an alternative to the Ottawa Process. We are of the opinion that these two processes should be complementary and mutually reinforcing.

Maybe I should recall at this stage the words of Mr. Alexander Downer, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia, who urged the CD to prove to those who do not believe that this Conference can deliver a treaty fast enough to meet the urgency of the humanitarian crisis that they are wrong.

(Mrs. Krásnohorská, Slovakia)

Before concluding, I should like to address another important issue, namely the expansion of the CD. As a country that has recent memories of being an observer, we are full of understanding for the cause of the applicant countries. Slovakia many times stated that, according to its belief, the CD should be open to every applicant. Having in mind these two facts, Slovakia fully supports the idea of nominating a special coordinator for CD expansion with a broad mandate to explore possible modalities and ways forward.

In conclusion I should like to stress once again that the time for bold moves by the CD and its member States is ripe. I wish you all success in your efforts, Mr. President.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Slovakia for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this stage? I recognize the representative of Finland. Ambassador Patokallio has the floor.

Mr. PATOKALLIO (Finland): Mr. President, let me begin my brief remarks by congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. You can count on the full and active cooperation of my country in your important task.

My brief remarks will focus on one issue only: the issue of anti-personnel landmines. The issue of anti-personnel landmines has now been discussed within the Conference on Disarmament for several weeks. It is time to move from discussion to action. The international community is calling for concrete progress. The CD should respond to its call. The CD should prove to those who do not believe that this Conference can deliver the treaty fast enough to meet the urgency of the humanitarian crisis that they are wrong (and I am quoting the Australian Foreign Minister).

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland stated in her address at the United Nations General Assembly last fall that the Conference on Disarmament, as the single negotiating body for disarmament of the international community, is the most natural forum for negotiations on anti-personnel landmines. Clearly, an increasing number of delegations at this Conference share her view.

The objective for Finland has been and remains to establish without delay an ad hoc committee on anti-personnel landmines. Its task should be to negotiate a global, legally binding and verifiable ban on these weapons.

At the opening session of the CD in January, Finland proposed the appointment of a special coordinator for anti-personnel landmines. I wish to repeat this proposal. The intervening weeks have convinced us even more that the appointment of a special coordinator is the most realistic and effective means to come to an agreement on the establishment of the ad hoc committee and to start negotiations.

I would like to ask you, Mr. President, to seek agreement now on the appointment of the special coordinator. His or her job would be to explore the possibility of addressing the issue of anti-personnel landmines in the Conference.

(Mr. Patokallio, Finland)

We hope that you, Mr. President, could reach an agreement on the special coordinator if not today, then by the next plenary. The coordinator should address the mandate and other issues related to the establishment of the ad hoc committee. Finally, I want to underline the sense of urgency. I believe that the coordinator should be tasked to report to the Conference before Easter.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Finland for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I would ask again whether any other delegation wishes to take the floor at this stage.

As I announced earlier today, I should now like to take up for decision the requests received from Luxembourg and Kyrgyzstan to participate, as observers, in the work of the Conference during its 1997 session. These requests are contained in document CD/WP.485, which is before us. May I take it that the Conference agrees to these requests?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: As you are all aware, on Tuesday evening, I completed the round of bilateral consultations with members of the Conference, with a view to proceeding to the next step of our work following the adoption of the agenda for the session, namely to develop consensus on the organizational arrangements to deal with the issues that are before the Conference.

I am in the process of making a thorough assessment of these consultations, the outcome of which will be brought to the attention of the members of the Conference in an appropriate manner.

I have appreciated very much the open way in which delegations expressed their views. I am, therefore, most thankful for the spirit of cooperation and understanding displayed by all delegations.

The consultations proved to be useful, allowing me to see better where delegations stand as far as their positions on three important issues are concerned: namely, on nuclear disarmament, the fissile material cut-off treaty and anti-personnel landmines, as well as, in some cases, on other issues of major interest to them.

Interesting ideas and suggestions have been expressed. But the main lesson that I have learned is that more work is needed in order to make tangible progress. I am ready to continue my efforts to this end in a manner consistent with the rules of procedure of the Conference on Disarmament.

This concludes my preliminary remarks on the bilateral consultations I held.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will be held on Thursday, 6 March 1997 at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.

CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

CD/PV.758
6 March 1997

ENGLISH

FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND FIFTY-EIGHTH PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 6 March 1997, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Grecu (Romania)

GE.97-60467 (E)

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I call to order the 758th plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament.

On my list of speakers I have the representatives of Cyprus and Mexico. However, before giving them the floor I would like to inform you that at the end of this plenary meeting I intend to hold a brief session of informal Presidential consultations open to participation by all delegations, at which I would like to pass on to you the preliminary results of the bilateral consultations which I have had with the members of the Conference concerning our programme of work and the organization of the session, following the adoption of the agenda.

As you know, the representative of Germany, Ambassador Wolfgang Hoffmann, is leaving the Conference following his appointment as Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. Ambassador Hoffmann has represented his Government at the Conference for more than four years with competence and talent, upholding the positions of his country with courage and authority. We all recall the personal contribution which he made in 1993 when he chaired the Ad Hoc Committee on Prohibition of an Arms Race in Outer Space. I would also like to stress the major role which Ambassador Hoffmann played in the negotiations on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in 1994 in the Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee's Working Group on Verification. We are also familiar with the contribution that he made as a Friend of the Chair during the final phase of negotiations on the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, especially in the preparation of the document on the Preparatory Commission. Finally, I need hardly stress the way in which he presided over the work of the United Nations Disarmament Commission last year. Therefore, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, I would like to wish Ambassador Hoffmann every success in his new responsibilities and assure him of our friendship.

I would also like to convey, on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf, a cordial welcome to the representatives of non-governmental organizations present in the public gallery today. As you know, International Women's Day will be celebrated on 8 March, and to mark that event, in accordance with established practice, the community of non-governmental organizations will address a message to the Conference. I am sure that the Conference joins me in expressing our best wishes to all the women present in the room today and telling them that we greatly appreciate their steadfast commitment for peace and disarmament as well as their continued interest in our efforts.

Now I would like to give the floor to the Secretary-General of the Conference and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, who will read their message to the Conference.

Mr. PETRUSKY (Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations): I have the privilege to bring to your attention the following message from the International Women's Day and Disarmament Seminar to the Conference on Disarmament. I quote:

"Esteemed delegates,

"We are women from 32 countries, representing all continents, gathered in Geneva to discuss nuclear disarmament as our way to mark International Women's Day.

"We are glad that the Chemical Weapons Convention will enter into force by 29 April, and we urge those Governments who have not done so already to ratify this treaty. Furthermore, we recognize that START I and START II were significant steps on the road to nuclear disarmament, and we call on the United States of America and the Russian Federation to move to START III.

"Our International Women's Disarmament Seminars have for many years dealt with different aspects of the work of the Conference on Disarmament. This time we are focusing on nuclear disarmament which we consider of the utmost importance particularly in this year for the following reasons:

"Firstly, in 1996 the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty banning the testing of nuclear weapons in all environments for all time was signed. We congratulate the Conference on Disarmament on the completion of the CTBT and urge those States that have nuclear weapons or nuclear power plants to sign and to ratify it. We regret however that the treaty does not inhibit laboratory testing, therefore allowing further research and development of nuclear weapons to continue, and regret the absence of a concrete link to the wider goals of nuclear disarmament. For us, women peace activists from many countries who have mobilized and lobbied to stop nuclear testing, it is important that the CTBT Organization in Vienna will start its work soon. We will continue to monitor the ongoing work of the CTBTO to oversee the implementation and verification of the treaty. We wish success to those who are involved in this week's conference to establish the CTBTO and urge them to make provisions for constructive interactions with NGOs.

"Secondly, in 1996 the International Court of Justice declared that a 'threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict, and in particular the principles and rules of humanitarian law'.

"Thirdly, also last year, the Canberra Commission report on the elimination of nuclear weapons outlined a step-by-step programme for the abolition of nuclear weapons, stating that 'the only complete defence is the elimination of nuclear weapons and assurance that they will never be produced again'.

(Mr. Petrovsky, Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations)

"We call on you to use the momentum generated by these important events to take concrete action in 1997 on nuclear disarmament and to respond to the worldwide movement of people and public institutions demanding that all nuclear-weapon Powers reduce their arsenals to zero. More and more people are speaking out on what the peace movement has been saying for decades - namely that nuclear weapons diminish rather than increase military security. Like the chemical and biological weapons conventions, the time has come for a nuclear weapons convention.

"The fifty-first United Nations General Assembly called upon States to begin negotiations in 1997 on a nuclear weapons convention which would provide for nuclear disarmament in all its aspects, and you have put nuclear disarmament as the first item on your agenda this year. We call on you to take the next step and establish an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament to begin concrete negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention.

"We are conscious of the fact that the 21,000 nuclear weapons currently on our planet cannot be removed overnight. However, if the Governments are committed to transform the declared opposition to nuclear weapons into concrete political action, many ways can be found to reach complete nuclear disarmament within a reasonable time-frame. The April 1997 Preparatory Committee meeting of the States party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty will begin a new review process of the Treaty. Our hopes are high that this new review process, in line with the 'Principles and objectives' document agreed upon at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the NPT, will be an important instrument to bring nuclear disarmament closer. It could serve as a powerful support to the CD in negotiating a nuclear weapons convention. We can assure you of our support in these efforts. We are very active in preparing for the NPT Preparatory Committee meeting in New York, raising public awareness for this important meeting which we hope can contribute to the work of the CD.

"A comprehensive cut-off of fissile material would strengthen the existing non-proliferation regime and provide important progress towards the achievement of a nuclear-weapon-free world. Any attempt to control the potential use of weapon-usable material for weapon purposes has to include both military and civilian weapon-usable materials. We encourage you to continue with your efforts to establish an ad hoc committee to negotiate a treaty on the cut-off of nuclear-weapons-grade fissile material which includes an inventory of stockpiles.

"Finally we urge you again to consider enlarging the role of NGOs in the work of the CD. Our work represents the voices of many women around the world who are active at local and national levels working to strengthen awareness and action on disarmament. We would like to thank you for receiving our message once again. We wish you strength and all the energy for the work ahead of you. We can assure you of our full support."

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the Secretary-General of the Conference for reading the message from the community of non-governmental organizations on the occasion of International Women's Day. I now give the floor to the representative of New Zealand, Ambassador Armstrong, on behalf of the Western Group.

Mr. ARMSTRONG (New Zealand): Mr. President, may I first, on behalf of my colleagues in the Western Group, joint you in extending to a distinguished member of our group, Ambassador Hoffmann of Germany, our warm thanks for his considerab_e achievements during his time in Geneva, and our congratulations on his new role. We share fully the sentiments which you yourself have eloquently expressed in this regard, and we extend our best wishes to Ambassador Hoffmann, both as a colleague and as a friend.

On behalf of the members of the Western Group, it is my pleasure to extend a warm welcome to the organizations which have joined the CD today to mark International Women's Day. In particular, our thanks go to the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom for the message of encouragement contained in the address read by the Secretary-General. We have noted with special interest the points made about the ongoing efforts in this body to secure its work programme for 1997. A wide range of non-governmental organizations is associated with the statement we have just heard. The seminars they organize and their publications demonstrate clearly the interest which the work of this Conference continues to attract. Their ongoing work reminds us of our responsibilities in the field of arms control and disarmament.

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): Mr. President, as I am taking the floor for the first time since you took over the post of President, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincerest congratulations to you. I should also like to express our satisfaction at the recent selection of Ambassador Hoffmann to head the secretariat for the CTBTO. We will miss his timely statements and his admirable legal judgement in this body. Our loss is the CTBT's gain. We wish our friend Ambassador Hoffmann all the very best for himself and his family in Vienna.

On behalf of the Group of 21 I would like to thank Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky, the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, for reading the message from the community of non-governmental organizations on the occasion of International Women's Day on 8 March. On behalf of the Group of 21 I would like to thank the non-governmental organizations in question for their support for the cause of disarmament and the interest they have expressed in our work. In my Group we acknowledge the leading role which women play in the movement for peace, and we wish to assure them that all the delegations in the Group of 21 are firmly committed to general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.

We take this opportunity to congratulate all the distinguished women who head or belong to delegations in the Conference on Disarmament, those working in the secretariat, and those in the interpretation booths who make our

(Mr. de Icaza, Mexico)

negotiations possible. Lastly, allow me to congratulate all women in non-governmental organizations for their statement today and for the support and encouragement for the positions taken by the Group of 21, particularly with respect to the objective of bringing about a world free from nuclear weapons.

Mr. NARAY (Hungary): I also would like to join those colleagues who have congratulated Ambassador Hoffmann on his election as head of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. We wish him success in his new responsible post.

As was the case last year, the honour to make a statement on the occasion of International Women's Day on behalf of the Eastern European regional group is bestowed on my delegation. I can hardly find any more attractive task than to do this.

The Hungarian delegation has the honour to welcome, on behalf of the Eastern European Group in the Conference on Disarmament, the message from non-governmental organizations. We thank them for their interest and support they have given to our work. On behalf of my Group, the Hungarian delegation would like to convey to the representatives of the women's international organizations, as well as all women heads and members of delegations, secretariat staff and interpreters, our heartfelt congratulations on the eve of International Women's Day.

Mr. SHA (China) (translated from Chinese): First of all the Chinese delegation would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Ambassador of Germany, Mr. Hoffmann on being selected as the Executive Secretary of the Preparatory Commission for the CTBTO. His rich diplomatic experience and skills as well as his style of getting things done have left a very deep impression on all of us. The Chinese delegation fully believes that under his leadership the work of the future Provisional Technical Secretariat will proceed effectively. We wish him success in his work.

In two days it will be International Women's Day. The Chinese delegation as the Group of 1 in the CD wants to take this opportunity to express its warm congratulations to all women colleagues in the CD, ladies who are observing the proceedings of our meeting in the public gallery and women members of the secretariat who have worked so diligently for us. As an old Chinese saying goes, "If you do not respect women then you are not respecting your mother. If you do not respect your mother then you are not showing filial affection." Those who do not show filial affection will be unwelcome in society. They will even be spurned. As another saying in modern-day China goes "Women hold up half the sky." In fact, in all areas of endeavour, including disarmament, arms control and international peace and security, women have made an equally important contribution. The Chinese delegation wishes all ladies here health and happiness in their own lives and their family lives and hopes that they will be even more deeply involved in our work on disarmament and arms control so as to make a greater contribution to the safeguarding of international peace and security.

Mr. ZACKHEOS (Cyprus): The main purpose of my intervention is to express our hope and expectation that the pace of the substantial work of our Conference will be accelerated.

My Government greatly appreciates the enormous efforts made by the previous President and yourself, Sir, for finding a way to overcome existing difficulties. We realize, however, that progress can only be achieved if there is political will from all countries and groups of countries for a compromise. After all, compromise and negotiation are the essence of multilateral diplomacy.

A cut-off treaty on fissile material production is a logical step following the signing of the CTBT and should be given our utmost attention. The conclusion of the CTBT was an event of historic consequence. Countries that have signed should now intensify their ratification process. At the same time, we should stay in close touch with the countries that did not find it possible to sign. I wish to observe that the awareness of the inherent dangers in nuclear testing has been raised in our societies and it will be almost impossible for any country to conduct a nuclear explosion taking into account the consequences, including adverse world public opinion.

Equally important is the negotiation of an agreement banning anti-personnel landmines. The CD, without minimizing the importance of other forums and their possible positive contribution in furthering our common goal, guarantees that adequate consideration is given to all aspects and to all the preoccupations of actors in the international scene. My Government supports, in principle, the destruction of all anti-personnel mines placed along the ceasefire line in Cyprus, on condition of reciprocity. Let me underline that in situations of conflict, ratification of relevant arms control and disarmament agreements by all countries involved is a necessary prerequisite for their universal application.

Cyprus has, over the years, consistently supported the objective of complete and general disarmament, which addresses the security concerns of small States like ours, and we would welcome any efforts which will advance this noble cause. Cyprus was in the forefront of countries in the United Nations advocating consideration of the relationship between disarmament and development.

The first major achievement of the CD was the conclusion of the Convention on Chemical Weapons. It is a source of gratification that the Convention will enter into force on 29 April 1997. At the same time, it goes without saying that for the Convention to be fully effective it should have universal support and be ratified by all, including permanent members of the Security Council. Ratification by the major Powers will be a big boost to this historic disarmament and non-proliferation treaty, which totally prohibits chemical weapons including the means of their delivery. We believe that assistance, both technical and financial, for the destruction of chemical weapons stockpiles should be provided to countries in need.

(Mr. Zackheos, Cyprus)

We also support the strengthening of the Biological Weapons Convention through an effective verification mechanism.

I wish to take this opportunity to underline the importance of the proposal of President Clerides for the complete demilitarization of the Republic of Cyprus, which we consider as our contribution to efforts for conventional weapons disarmament. This proposal represents a genuine answer to the security concerns of all Cypriots. Moreover, its implementation will lead to stability in our sensitive region. The proposal has received widespread international support. We express the hope that serious consideration will be given to it in the efforts for finding a just solution to the Cyprus problem in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions.

Turning now to the issue of the enlargement of membership of the Conference, I wish to join previous speakers in urging the appointment, as soon as possible, of a special coordinator. I believe that in the new international environment opportunities should be given to countries that wish to make a positive contribution to the work of the Conference. After all, the main activity of the CD is the elaboration of relevant conventions and treaties which we are all asked to sign and ratify.

In conclusion, on this auspicious occasion, on the eve of International Women's Day, I wish to place on record our appreciation to all women's NGOs for their untiring efforts and moral weight they bring in the field of disarmament.

I extend also our congratulations to Ambassador Hoffmann on his appointment and our best wishes for every success in his difficult but so important task.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Cyprus for his statement and kind words to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico, Ambassador de Icaza.

Mr. de ICAZA (Mexico) (translated from Spanish): The delegation of Mexico expresses its satisfaction that the Conference, bearing in mind the relevant provisions of the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, has achieved consensus on its agenda for this year, following four weeks of intensive negotiations ably conducted by your predecessor, Mr. President, Ambassador Sun of the Republic of Korea. It is our understanding that the consensus achieved means that, as long as the consultations on the review of the agenda have not been concluded and without prejudging their results, the objectives, priorities and principles laid down in the 1978 document must continue to guide our negotiations and must be respected in the preparation of our programme of work. Although our agenda for this year contains seven items, we know that in practice the Conference could not simultaneously carry on negotiations on each and every one of them. In fact it is doubtful whether the Conference is capable of pursuing and bringing to a conclusion more than one set of negotiations at a time. Hence

(Mr. de Icaza, Mexico)

the need not to waste our limited resources by undertaking tasks which are not among the highest priorities or which would duplicate efforts undertaken in other multilateral forums.

Nuclear disarmament measures have the highest priority under the terms of the Final Document, which, as we have agreed, must guide our endeavours. It has been said that given the fact that the end of the cold war has reduced the threat of a nuclear holocaust, nuclear disarmament no longer deserves such a high priority. In this regard it must be pointed out that although the threat of a nuclear holocaust has diminished, no one can guarantee for how long, and it will persist as long as nuclear weapons continue to exist. But furthermore let us point out that in addition to the nightmare of the possible annihilation of mankind as a result of a global nuclear war, nowadays increasing concern has arisen regarding the reliability and safety of nuclear arsenals, and there is genuine alarm with respect to the control of the technology and the materials involved in the production of nuclear weapons. The risk of unauthorized or accidental launches has increased, and we are as close to possible catastrophes as we were during the East-West confrontation.

With admirable foresight, the authors of the Final Document declared that measures of nuclear disarmament should have the highest priority "until the total elimination of nuclear weapons ... has been achieved". International public opinion, organized civil society and the majority of the Member States of the United Nations have undertaken and taken a variety of initiatives with a view to the total elimination of nuclear weapons, in what is starting to resemble a general mobilization for the delegitimization of such weapons, the demonstration of the anachronistic nature of the doctrines which underpin them and the awakening of a new consciousness that existing arsenals continue to represent a threat to the very survival of mankind. In August last year, for instance, the Canberra Commission issued a report on the elimination of nuclear weapons which calls their military utility into question, highlights the risks of accidental or unauthorized use, affirms that possession stimulates proliferation and recommends practical and concrete measures for a realistic programme leading to a nuclear-weapon-free world. The report states that the first requirement is an unequivocal political commitment by the five nuclear-weapon States to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons and the immediate commencement of the necessary negotiations. We share that opinion. We also believe, as 61 retired generals and admirals from 17 different countries stated on 5 December 1996, that "we have been presented with a challenge of the highest possible historic importance - the creation of a nuclear-weapons-free world. The end of the cold war makes it possible. The dangers of proliferation, terrorism, and a new nuclear arms race render it necessary. We must not fail to seize our opportunity. There is no alternative".

However, the negotiation of measures related to nuclear disarmament are not only the highest priority in the sphere of disarmament, but also constitute an obligation. Let us recall that the International Court of Justice, in its historic advisory opinion of 8 July 1996, unanimously concluded that "there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects

under strict and effective international control". The Court explained in sections 99 and 100 of its advisory opinion that the obligation contained in article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is an obligation to achieve a precise result - nuclear disarmament in all its aspects - and that this twofold obligation to pursue and to conclude negotiations concerns all States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, or, in other words, the vast majority of the international community. According to the Court, any realistic search for nuclear disarmament necessitates the cooperation of all States. In order to comply with this binding obligation, and considering that nuclear disarmament has the highest priority in the negotiations on disarmament, the Group of 21 has been proposing in this sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament the immediate establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament.

The Final Document states that the achievement of nuclear disarmament requires the negotiation of agreements on the development and qualitative improvement of nuclear-weapon systems, cessation of the production of all types of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery and of the production of fissionable material for weapons purposes, and "a comprehensive, phased programme with agreed time-frames, whenever feasible, for progressive and balanced reduction of stockpiles of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery, leading to their ultimate and complete elimination at the earliest possible time". That is why, in March last year, the Group of 21 proposed that the ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament should have as a mandate the negotiation of a phased programme of nuclear disarmament for the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons within a specified framework of time. As you will remember, last year 28 delegations from member States of the Conference on Disarmament belonging to the Group of 21 presented a proposal for a programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons, and the United Nations General Assembly, in its resolution 51/45 O, when calling upon this Conference to establish an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, urged it to take the programme of action into account.

The cessation of the production of fissile material for weapons purposes must be a genuine disarmament measure, linked to the cessation of the production of all types of nuclear weapons, as the 1978 Final Document lays down. Ambassador Shannon's 1995 report and the implicit mandate contained therein should make it possible for the ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament to discuss the cessation of the production of fissile material for weapons purposes as well as the problem of past production and the management of existing stocks, so as to make sure that all production of nuclear weapons will cease.

To sum up, the delegation of Mexico considers that in the drafting of our programme of work the highest priority must continue to be given to nuclear disarmament, and that we should reach an agreement which takes into account the different concerns of the member States by constituting immediately an ad hoc committee with a wide mandate which could include, first, the negotiation of a legally binding multilateral agreement which unequivocally binds all States to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, secondly, the identification of measures necessary to achieve the complete

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elimination of nuclear weapons and the drafting of a phased programme with agreed time-frames, and lastly, the negotiation of a convention on the prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons purposes.

My delegation has listened with great interest to the statements made in the plenary of the Conference, and in informal meetings, regarding the urgent need for a total ban on the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. We share the concern and sense of urgency inspiring those delegations which support a total ban on such weapons. The Government of Mexico considers that the use of this type of weapon constitutes a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law and that the only real solution to the problems that it poses is the total abolition of anti-personnel landmines and the destruction of existing stockpiles. The Government of Mexico does not produce or import anti-personnel landmines and maintains strict and constant surveillance of Mexican firms or companies which use explosive material and does not grant any permits for the production of anti-personnel landmines. Mexico is among the countries which endorse the need to make progress as fast as possible towards the prohibition of such weapons in all its aspects, and accordingly it calls upon Governments to accede to and/or ratify, as the case may be, the 1980 United Nations Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, and its Protocols.

We have taken note with all due respect, since they have been put forward by delegations of countries with which Mexico has excellent and friendly relations, of the arguments in favour of negotiations on anti-personnel landmines being carried out by this Conference. Nevertheless, restrictions or prohibitions on conventional weapons which are excessively injurious or have indiscriminate effects should be negotiated in their proper context, which is that of the reaffirmation and development of international humanitarian law in general and the 1980 Convention in particular, review conferences for which can and should be prepared for in ad hoc meetings, inter alia with the help of the International Committee of the Red Cross. Conferences open to all are common practice in the field of international humanitarian law, and conferences expressly convened by individual countries have arrived at proscriptions and prohibitions on the use of conventional weapons which have secured universal acceptance. In the Ottawa Process we hope to conclude a legally binding international agreement this year to ban anti-personnel landmines and we are confident that, thanks to the snowball effect, we will establish a universal standard that will soon find general acceptance. We also hope that the Ottawa Process, in which we are actively participating, will not stop at the adoption of a legally binding instrument banning anti-personnel landmines but will continue as a group for the promotion of prohibitions on the use of or restrictions on other conventional weapons such as incendiary weapons, fuel-air explosives and munitions containing spent uranium, which could be considered in the next conference to review the 1980 Convention, scheduled to take place in four years' time.

The anti-personnel landmines crisis calls for urgent solutions. This Conference is not noted for the swiftness of its negotiations. Nor can it be

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said that the agreements we have arrived at here are assured of universality and the participation of "key States". Conventional disarmament can hardly be approached one weapon at a time, since, as the Final Document states, it must be carried out in a balanced and equitable manner so as not to allow any State or group of States to obtain advantages over others, and it should deal with balanced reductions of armed forces and of conventional weapons, with a view to promoting or strengthening stability at a lower military level. In contrast, bans on weapons that cause excessive suffering or have indiscriminate effects derive from the principle that belligerents should not cause their adversary damage out of proportion to the sole legitimate object of armed conflicts, which is to destroy or weaken the military potential of the enemy. Because the objectives which are pursued and the principles which are applicable are different in the field of disarmament and in the field of international humanitarian law, the General Assembly at its first special session devoted to disarmament entrusted the task of reaching agreement on conventional weapons which cause unnecessary suffering or have indiscriminate effects to a special conference of the United Nations, and not to this sole negotiating forum for disarmament. This forum has neither previous experience nor special expertise in humanitarian issues. As for the proposal that here in the Conference on Disarmament we should initiate gradual and phased negotiations on mines, the answer is that we have been doing so for the last 90 years, since The Hague Convention VIII relative to the Laying of Automatic Submarine Contact Mines. In 1974 Mexico proposed a ban on mines delivered from aircraft or remotely by artillery, since those are the mines which are used on a large scale in a scattered manner and have the most indiscriminate effects. In 1980 restrictions were placed on the use of landmines and in May last year, for the first time, the total prohibition of a landmine - the non-detectable anti-personnel landmine - was achieved. The time has come to ban all anti-personnel landmines, and to do so in the proper forum.

To sum up, as we stated in the First Committee of the General Assembly of the United Nations, we are not convinced that this is an appropriate forum in which to complete as soon as possible negotiations on an agreement to ban the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. The Conference on Disarmament must give the highest priority to negotiations on nuclear disarmament and should not embark on exercises which duplicate efforts that are being successfully pursued in other forums and which would divert us from the responsibilities which the international community has entrusted to us.

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank the representative of Mexico for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. Would any other delegation like to take the floor at this point?

Before adjourning this plenary, I would like to inform you that the next plenary meeting of the Conference will take place on Tuesday, 11 March 1997 at 10 a.m. At that plenary meeting, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, Mrs. Lena Hjelm-Wallén will address the Conference.

I give the floor to Ambassador Hoffmann of Germany.

Mr. HOFFMANN (Germany): As this will probably be my last formal plenary, I have the urge to have the last word. First of all, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, and colleagues for your very friendly words of adieu. Over the last four years we have done considerable work together and we have even had some success. I thank all colleagues for all the cooperation and friendship they have extended to me. I thank the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General of the CD for their assistance. I thank the members of the secretariat for all the diligent work into our cause. I am now crossing the line to their side of disarmament affairs. This will be an interesting new experience. I noted with interest that the NGOs intend to verify the verifiers also in Vienna. I am looking forward to this.

My predecessor, when he left the CD, had prepared a farewell speech on the wall paintings in this Council Chamber, but he never made this speech. I will not do so either. I have sat on all four sides of this Council Chamber and, therefore, it is really time to leave. But in doing so, I think it would be appropriate just to drink to the health of the CD with delegates, with members of the secretariat and with NGOs. You will find the barriers in the ante-room probably a little inconvenient, but they are there due to the housewife in the soul of the United Nations Administration: the carpet has to be protected. All the same, I am grateful to Vladimir Petrovsky that he made this venue possible, so I invite you all to have drinks with me after the meeting in the ante-room and, of course, as a private meeting will follow immediately, the NGOs will have the first go at the drinks. In this case, it means "ladies first".

The PRESIDENT (translated from French): I thank Ambassador Hoffmann for his statement. I would remind you that after the end of this plenary meeting I will hold an open-ended informal session of Presidential consultations in this same room, after a brief pause.

The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.